

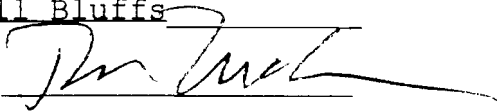
AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

Thomas N. Holmquist for the Masters of Arts

in History presented on January 3, 1994

Title: Pioneer Cross, Swedish Settlements

Along The Smoky Hill Bluffs

Abstract approved: 

Kansas is a state blessed with many riches, the greatest of which is her people. This state is made up of a patchwork of diverse cultures and ethnic groups. Many areas are notable primarily because they have retained the cultural identity that their pioneer ancestors brought with them from their countries of origin.

One such area is the Smoky Valley of central Kansas. Here on the banks of the Smoky Hill River, Swedish pioneers settled just over 125 years ago. They brought with them their culture, language, and their love of art and music. Within a few years, they developed one of the largest Swedish settlements in the United States.

Originally, two independent companies were formed to settle the Smoky Valley. The Swedish Agricultural Company of McPherson County, Kansas settled the land where the city of Lindsborg now stands. Its history has been documented in numerous scholarly writings.

However, the equally important Galesburg Colonization Company has been ignored by scholars. The Galesburg Company was the larger of the two organizations and settled a much larger area. This company founded the Fremont and Salemsberg Lutheran Churches and subsequently the towns of Marquette, Smolan, and Assaria.

The purpose of this thesis is to bring forward the history of the Galesburg Colonization Company and the extraordinary Swedish pioneers who settled within those communities. Their story is common to many of the ethnic groups who settled in Kansas, yet it is also a unique tale of hardship, courage and the ultimate victory of a people of great faith. It also enriches our knowledge of the cultural diversity of Kansas and adds to our historical and cultural understanding of the pioneer experience.

PIONEER CROSS  
SWEDISH SETTLEMENTS ALONG THE  
SMOKY HILL BLUFFS

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A Thesis

Presented to  
the Division of Social Sciences  
EMPORIA STATE UNIVERSITY

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Arts

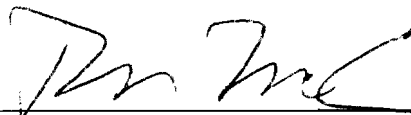
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by

Thomas N. Holmquist

January 1994

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Approved for the Graduate Council

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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I also wish to express my appreciation to the Salemsborg and Freemount Lutheran Churches, the Swenson Swedish Immigration Center in Rock Island, Illinois, the Bethany College Library, the Salina Public Library and especially to Mrs. Mary Jane Mayfield of the Marquette Public Library who loaned me her rarest books for my research.

Thanks to Dr. Thomas Isern who encouraged my work and directed me toward my own backyard to find a story worth telling and to Linda Hubalek, who worked so very hard to guide me through the many pitfalls of the editing and publishing process.

Finally, I would like to express my sincerest appreciation to my family. My children, Ryan, Majkin and John saw little of their dad for months on end, but always understood. My parents, who gave me constant encouragement and to Mark, Mardel, Marla and Larry who believed in me - thank you. To my wife, Marlysue, who did so many things so that I could research and write. Her listening, criticizing, and continued encouragement were vital to the completion of this book. She always knew that someday I would write this story.

The Swedish heritage of the Smoky Valley is worth the time it takes to pass it on to a child. Tell them the stories, teach them the traditions, and pass on to each one the legacy of the Pioneer Cross.

Thomas N. Holmquist

This work is dedicated to my father, Darrel Holmquist, and to the memory of my uncle, Evan Holmquist. They planted a seed, repeated the stories, and nurtured a sense of history and the true heritage of the Smoky Valley of Kansas in the heart of a small boy.

## Preface

As the morning sun rises on the eastern horizon, I often walk the few paces from the farmhouse door to the edge of the nearest field of growing crops. This land upon which I stand was first turned by my great-grandfather 125 years ago, and is now entrusted to my care. My gaze starts with the progress of the ripening crop before me, but soon my attention is drawn beyond the field and even the distant trees. The twin towers of a country church can be perceived in the distance. It is not the small white-framed wood structure that usually comes to mind when one thinks of a rural church building. It is instead a great red-brick cathedral, brilliant in the morning light, standing alone in the center of the Smoky Valley at the crest of an ancient alluvial hill.

This church stands not in the square of a busy town but alone in a valley among the gently rolling fields and pastures. It is the ultimate symbol of the hard work, sacrifices and devotion the early Swedish immigrants made when they arrived here in 1869. The construction of this building was their way of thanking and praising God for their new life on the virgin prairie of Kansas. These pioneers of the past now keep a lonely vigil from their graveyard beds in the shadow of the giant structure.

The Swedes who arrived here in 1869 called this hill Salemsborg, meaning "fortress of peace." Little did they know when they named their first crude earthen shelter, that a later church would truly become a fortress on the prairie, and that it would become the spiritual home of five generations of people, as vital today as it was at its founding 125 years ago.

Looking past the church in the distance, I can see the Smoky Hill Bluffs towering above the Smoky Valley. This four-mile-long stretch of hills is the most dominant feature of the terrain. Upon the crest of the northernmost hill, visible for many miles in the morning light, stands a monument to the courage, hardship, privation and suffering of the Swedish pioneers. Built in 1941, this white cross, painstakingly constructed of white-painted stones embedded in the side of the hill, reminds all who see it that in the shadow of these hills, a hardy people planted their roots, grew in the fertile soil, and blossomed into the strong people who live there today.

A Swedish Lutheran pastor from Galesburg, Illinois, and four other men from area congregations first saw this region in 1868. They were searching for land for a group of Swedish immigrants from their churches that wanted to move out of crowded Illinois. A group of over 300 families formed the Galesburg Colonization Company, and these men were given the mission to find enough land to settle all of these people into a new community.



Little did they realize when they first gazed through the mist at the blue-green bluffs, that a monument would be placed on the crest of the northernmost hill to commemorate the day they entered the valley and found themselves a home. Twenty miles to the southwest of Salemsborg, over the Smoky Hill Bluffs and down into the fertile valley along the Smoky Hill River stands another great rural church, Freemount Lutheran. In front of this brick building, nearly hidden by a grove of towering cottonwood trees, is a small stone church, built by part of the Galesburg group that settled in the southern area of the land bought by the committee. This lonely whistle stop along the Missouri Pacific Railway is named Fremont, so named after the great explorer John C. Fremont. But the immigrants called it Free Mount, which translated meant the "liberated place." They were now free to live and worship as they pleased on the prairie of Kansas.

The Swedish settlers who came to live in the southern portion of Saline County, and the northwestern quarter of McPherson County, Kansas were strong willed, adventurous and pious. They came to Kansas in the years following the American Civil War and were among the flood of migrants from the East and immigrants from across the sea that had moved, looking for an opportunity to build homes, create businesses and find the happiness and security that had been denied them in their European homelands. It was here, in Kansas, that they found that opportunity; here they decided to stay.

Today the descendants of those hearty Swedish pioneers are still here in the Smoky Valley prosperous farmers and businessmen, educators and musicians, homemakers and laborers.

Questions arise in the mind of an observer admiring these two great churches and wandering around the cemeteries reading the names of so many born in Sweden, and having died in Kansas. What brought these people, the lifeblood of Sweden, to these plains? Why did they settle here? Who were these daring pioneers, and what made them leave their ancestral homes, travel halfway round the world, and settle on an unknown prairie?

Many books, articles, and papers have been written about the Swedes that settled the Lindsborg community of northern McPherson County. Their story has been documented and related fully in every way. The Lindsborg community remains, because of its location, the center of Swedish culture in Kansas. The contributions of Lindsborg's Swedish heritage have been significant and long lasting.

However, little thought or time has been spent documenting the settlement and history of the communities of Swedish people who settled directly north and west of Lindsborg. The Salemsborg community to the north, and the Freemount community to the west emerged as centers of an entirely separate colony of Swedish pioneers, a group of people whose history was similar in many ways to that of the Lindsborg Swedes, and yet also very different. Those who

made up the Salemsborg and Freemount communities also contributed much to the Swedish culture of the Central Plains and the cultural diversity of the state of Kansas. Unfortunately, the contributions and history of the colony of pioneers of Salemsborg and Freemount have been neglected.

This book seeks to recognize the pioneers of Salemsborg and Freemount and to recount the history of their journey "to the peaceful mountain." They are now at rest, but their memory and accomplishments live on.

The cemetery at Salemsborg contains a very small, gray obelisk among the great memorial stones erected for the pioneer families. It is so unobtrusive that you have to search for it. On that stone, nearly unreadable after years of weathering, are the words: A. W. Dahlsten. It is fitting that his monument is so humble, and underneath it lies the remains of a modest, yet great, man. This book has been written to recognize A. W. Dahlsten; pastor, builder, a man of great vision and ceaseless energy. He was always too busy doing God's work to ever garner any recognition for himself. It is for this reason the story of the Galesburg Colonization Company and Pastor Dahlsten should be told.

The pioneers of southern Saline County, and northwestern McPherson County, are worthy of receiving recognition for fulfilling their hopes and dreams through great trials and difficulties. They came to Kansas looking for the "liberated place" and once there, they build the "fortress of peace." Their story is common to many of the

ethnic groups who settled Kansas during the second half of the nineteenth century, yet it is also a unique tale of hardship, courage and the ultimate victory of a people of great faith. It also enriches our knowledge of the cultural diversity of Kansas and adds to our historical and cultural understanding of the pioneer experience. Here then, is the story of *Pioneer Cross*.

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## Introduction

The Galesburg Colonization Company was a very unusual tool to bring a group of people to a new land. The Swedish pioneers who made up this company were strong, willful, and independent. They expected no help from any outside source and relied wholly on their own abilities to solve any problems they faced. These Swedes formed an informal company, sent representatives they could trust to search for promising land, and used their own resources to find a home for themselves and their children.

They found that place in Kansas and a settlement was started. Within a few years, one of the largest concentrations of ethnic Swedes anywhere in the United States had developed from this group. Today, their culture is preserved and it continues to flourish in this central Kansas area. In some cases, the land, chosen for them by a lottery, has been farmed continuously by the same family for over one hundred and twenty-five years, extending now to the fourth and fifth generations.

The Galesburg Colonization Company played a vital role in the settlement of one small part of the Great Plains. It provided a means for the Swedish settlers to find a home among their own ethnic group, insuring the preservation of their distinctive culture and traditions. The migration to

Kansas allowed for a temporary release from the religious turmoil afflicting the Swedish Lutheran Church during the late 1860s. The Galesburg Company gave rise to the spread of Lutheranism into the new region. Eventually the Galesburg people, and especially Pastor A.W. Dahlsten, were responsible for founding eleven new Lutheran Churches and three Mission Covenant Churches.

The immigrants who came to America left a harsh and very poor homeland in Sweden. Even though life in Kansas proved to be very difficult and full of hardship, it was a good decision for most of the people. A large percentage of the Swedes who came with the Galesburg Company to Kansas found economic prosperity greater than they could have ever imagined in their homeland. Within five years, they were landowners with prime farmland. Within a generation they had achieved financial success.

There were many groups and colonies that founded settlements on the Great Plains. Most were only a "specialized response to a temporary situation." Their decisions were made with gravity. "They had to adapt. The step they took to...Kansas was a very long one, spiritually and physically, and for them there was no turning back."<sup>1</sup>

The Galesburg Colonization Company was an informal tool that one group of potential settlers used to find a place for themselves on the Kansas prairie. It is significant that these individuals were not recruited by a railroad company land agent, nor anyone else. They found a

place for themselves, and created a community of ethnic Swedes who have preserved their culture and the heritage of their homeland, while adapting to a new environment, and a new land. In this way the Galesburg Colonization Company contributed to the rich cultural heritage of the Great Plains.



## Chapter 1

# Farewell, Mother Sweden

The Swedes who came to the Smoky Valley of central Kansas to settle were recent immigrants from Sweden. The decision to move away from their homeland to come to America and settle in a vast, far-off country was made by thousands of Swedish people. The choice to leave their native homeland and their families, and to travel halfway round the world and build a home in a foreign land, would not have been an easy one to make.

Sweden was not alone, as many other European countries experienced great emigrations of their populations during the nineteenth century.

Mass migrations have taken place at many times during the history of the world. However, this migration was unique. A vast new country across the Atlantic Ocean was open and welcoming anyone with the courage and initiative to develop its seemingly boundless resources.

Nineteenth century Sweden was plagued by economic, political, social, and religious turmoil. This massive unrest stirred the population to desire more from life than mere subsistence. Swedes looked first for fulfillment within Sweden, but when their homeland could not meet their growing needs, many turned toward America and its opportunities. Emigration became the answer to the problems of the downtrodden.

During the reign of King Charles XIV of Sweden (1818-1844), a period of peace descended upon the land. Political thought of the time focused on Scandinavian Nationalism which developed into a foreign policy that sought to unify the countries of Norway, Sweden, and Denmark under one sovereign. This nationalism arose in response to the influence of Russia and England, the two great powers of the time. By combining the three nations under one ruler, the Scandinavian nationalists hoped to remain neutral and keep themselves out of the Russo-Anglo conflict that would surely engulf Europe.

When the Swedish King Charles XIV died in 1844, Oscar I (1844-1859) ascended to the throne. Oscar I developed a foreign policy for Sweden that was somewhat different than the policies of King Charles. He favored the ways of England and shifted the balance of power in Scandinavia in England's favor. The king hoped to create a new military power in the north that would rival that of England and Russia. When the Crimean War broke out in 1854, Oscar I saw his opportunity.

A treaty was drawn up between England, France, and Sweden-Norway, guaranteeing their territories against Russia. This November Treaty left no doubt of Oscar I's intention to enter into war against Russia. However in 1856, the Crimean War ended, and it became apparent that Russia agreed to end hostilities partly because of the implied threat of war on its northwestern flank posed by the alliances agreed to in the November Treaty.

Although Oscar I built a large army and had great ambitions for world power, he did not have the chance to use it. He fell ill in 1857 and died in 1859.

Oscar I's successor, King Charles XV (1859-1872), did not possess the same strength of character and will as Oscar I and was unable to sustain the power of the monarchy. This Swedish king lost his authority to control Swedish foreign policy to the Swedish National Council. When Charles XV entered into dealings with foreign governments, his plans were usually overruled by the Council.

When Prussia and Austria attacked Denmark in 1863, Sweden promised to send 22,000 troops to Denmark's aid. Charles expected his allies, England and France, to support his move, but soon it became apparent that no aide would be forthcoming. The Swedish Council then repealed its support of the King's promise of aid to Denmark. The weakness of the November Treaty alliance dashed any hope of a union between the three Scandinavian countries. To the National Council's credit, these responsible statesmen were restrained by the obvious imperfections in Sweden's Army.

Since the beginning of the nineteenth century, the Swedish Army was characterized of two basic elements: the *indeling* system and *bevaring*.

Under the *indeling* system, the officers and enlisted cavalry lived on the King's land and received a salary provided for by taxing the peasants. The infantry soldier lived on a small holding that was imposed upon peasant

farmers. The peasant gave the land up in order to escape conscription himself. This system brought stability to the army and linked it to the people. The main problems for the infantry were in the outmoded system of payment in kind and an antiquated system of training. Any military training was brief and spasmodic. Lacking leadership, the army became unreliable and suffered from deficiencies in organization and discipline.

The second basis for the army was *bevaring*, or conscription. These soldiers were forced into the army from the peasant class. Naturally, morale and discipline were low. The law said that anyone with means could escape the manpower levy by finding a substitute or buying his way out of the army.

Those who could get out, did so, leaving an army of only the lowest class of soldier. Any real use of this army would have been reckless at best and Oscar I and Charles XV were prevented from using the army by cooler heads on the Swedish National Council.<sup>1</sup>

The conscription of soldiers into the Swedish military system was one of the great issues of emigration. The life of the conscripted soldier was harsh and pointless.

Poor pay, bad food, and inconsistent discipline made military service a difficult and unwanted life for most young Swedish men. When the opportunity presented itself, most soldiers left military service. They returned home only to find little opportunity for jobs, security or social

advancement. It soon became apparent that with so few prospects for a bright future in the Swedish countryside, emigration to the United States often seemed a desirable alternative.

Many former soldiers of the Swedish King made their way to the United States and some Swedish Army veterans soon found themselves in the blue uniform of the U.S. Army.

Swedish men joined the Union Army in large numbers during the Civil War. As a group, they generally held strong views opposing slavery. The record of their armed assistance to their newly adopted country was one of courage, sacrifice, and distinguished service. A number of these former soldiers, honored veterans of both the Swedish and Union Armies, came to the Smoky Valley of Kansas. Numerous writings by the pioneers referred to their meeting former comrades-in-arms in Kansas.<sup>2</sup>

The Swedish soldier often would adopt a new surname when he entered the army. Swedish tradition dictated that a son did not retain a surname but took the given name of his father and adding "son" to his name. Thus names such as Olaf Olafsson, John Johnson, and Carl Carlson were common. Understandably, this led to confusion in military units with multiple soldiers sharing common names such as Olaf Olafsson, Lars Larsson or Anders Andersson. The problem was remedied by having soldiers adopt new surnames that referred to some aspect of their military life. Names such as *Krig* (War), *Glad* (Happy), *Dahl* (Valley), *Pihl* (Arrow), or *Holm*

(Island) became common. Often derivations or combinations of these words became the names of the soldier.<sup>3</sup> These names generally became the accepted surname and followed the former soldier to America.<sup>4</sup> Each of the above names or variations could be found among the pioneers who settled the Smoky Valley of Kansas.

Not all Swedish soldiers disdained military service to the King of Sweden. One notable example was Nels Peter Flyckt. Born in 1822, Flyckt entered Swedish military service in 1840 under the *indeling* system. Nels Peter Flyckt possessed a keen mind, a high regard for discipline and a talent for handling horses. He soon rose in rank to become a non-commissioned officer and remained in the Swedish Cavalry for many years. During his periods away from military service, Flyckt experimented with new agricultural techniques. Because of his outstanding service to Sweden in the field of agriculture as well as his faithful service to the army, the King presented Nels Peter Flyckt with a medal. Flyckt was very proud of his medal and wore it at all times.

After thirty-four years of military service, Flyckt retired. Some years later he and his wife followed their children to America and eventually to Kansas. Their last years were spent at Salemsberg and when Flyckt died in 1920, he was buried, still wearing the medal given to him by the King of Sweden.<sup>5</sup>

## Social and Economic Conditions

The onset of the nineteenth century brought about great changes in the social and economic conditions of Sweden. The old traditions of strip farming and the village community changed. Dating from the Middle Ages, the village communities functioned with small stable populations of villagers sharing fields and pastures equitably, conducive to the good of the community.

The appearance of new agricultural practices changed the economic structure of the Swedish rural communities. Small plots of farm ground, cultivated by each family were combined to form large farms. As a result, large acreages controlled by a few owners who hired cheap labor quickly eroded, and soon replaced the traditional village community economy. Experimentation with new agricultural methods, new implements, and alternative crops offered fresh opportunities to those with financial backing and enterprising minds. What eventually emerged was a new class of agricultural laborers who were dependent on working on the newly established farms.

At the same time, the population of Sweden also continued growing. The peace which had come to Sweden after years of unrest, the vaccination of the populace from disease and the introduction of the potato as a food source, brought this rise in population, just as government policy decreased the number of jobs available. Between 1810 to

1850, the population of Sweden rose by 45% from 2.4 million to nearly 3.5 million.

This dramatic rise in population quickly overwhelmed the government's economic policy and its ability to provide better health care. The peasant farmer could not produce enough foodstuffs to support this great increase in population despite the improved agricultural productivity. In addition, unemployment and low wages plagued the laboring classes in many areas of Sweden. Regions dominated by large estates developed immense labor forces without any rights to own land. The estates could absorb more population and experienced little unemployment. Consequently, the rates of emigration from these areas were low.

The regions of Sweden where farmland was held in small family units were incapable of absorbing large gains in population. Traditional inheritance practices dictated that landholdings were passed down to a single inheritor, usually the oldest son. So many Swedish children died at an early age that parents produced large families insuring that they would have a future generation to inherit the land. Large families also provided the farmer with a ready source of labor. Some families were blessed, and a majority of the children reached adulthood. Few opportunities existed for the non-inheriting children. They were often hired out to other farmers and ended up among the landless peasant laborers.<sup>6</sup>



The story of the Jonas Svensson family illustrates this problem. The solution for this family was a rather unique alternative to a life of poverty and hopelessness awaiting most landless peasant children. Jonas and Martha Svensson raised a family of nine sons and one daughter in the parish of Hölme in Kronoberg County, Småland.

Svensson was a moderately successful peasant-farmer. However, nine sons could not inherit his small farm. In 1864, when the sons reached maturity, the family pooled their money and sent their second son, Johannes, to America in search of opportunities for the family. When Johannes arrived in America, he adopted the name Holmkvist.

After traveling in the United States for nearly a year, with most of his time spent in the Swedish communities of Illinois, Johannes returned with glowing reports of America. The following February, several of the sons and the daughter left Småland and emigrated to Illinois. Within a few years, the entire family had departed from Sweden leaving the youngest son, Carl, to inherit the farm.<sup>7</sup>

Sweden, in the first quarter of the nineteenth century, had not yet embarked into the Industrial Revolution. There were few jobs available in industry to absorb the growing excess agricultural population. The surplus laborers were forced to remain on the land as farm hands or casual laborers.

There were three types of agricultural laborers in Sweden. The crofters, *torparé*, worked a small piece of

ground under the management of peasant proprietors. Some laborers, *backstuga*, owned a cottage but no farm ground and worked for other farmers. The *stataré* were agricultural laborers who worked for a wage from a portion of the crop.<sup>8</sup>

These three classes of laborers made up the majority of Swedes who emigrated. Landless people slowly fell into a lower social class than landowners. They never enjoyed the cultural privileges of social class let alone economic security.

Emigration to the United States was their means of pursuing the cherished dream of individual farm ownership and to escape the stigma which lower social standing placed upon them in Sweden. The people yearned for the right to self-determination, where their talents and ambition would not be restricted by the station of their birth or the stifling effects of a socially and economically repressive tradition.<sup>9</sup>

To supplement the lack of agricultural jobs available in a region, the farm laborers sought other enterprises for employment. Forestry and fishing were common occupations where available, and both subsidized household income. Most regions in Sweden offered few non-agricultural related jobs. Where such jobs were available, emigration numbers were low. Industry was beginning to provide a means of upward social mobility by providing secure jobs and the hope of promotion and advancement in a career. Regions that lacked off-farm

jobs and few opportunities beyond day labor saw large rates of emigration.<sup>10</sup>

The economic demands that brought about emigration were usually rooted in a yearning to earn more than meager subsistence, build a savings, have amusement and achieve economic and social security. Love of home was strong and most emigrants stated that they would have stayed in Sweden if there was a chance to have their own home. In America, a settler might live in a sod hut, but he could hope to soon build a two-story palace; but in Sweden he who began life in a sod hut had every expectation of ending his life there. Hunger for land and home enticed thousands of Swedes to the Great Plains. One said it was a question of "bread and meat in America, or skin and bones in Sweden."<sup>11</sup>

Most of the first emigrants however, had been land-owning farmers in Sweden. The size of their farms were decreasing, but they could still afford the trip to the United States. The landless poor could not make the trip's necessary fees for the simple reason that they lacked the means to afford the crossing. They were for the most part from Halsingland, Dalarna, and Småland. When they could finally afford to leave, they traveled in family groups, with neighbors, or others from their home parish because they could travel much cheaper by going together. In this way a hundred or more persons might make the crossing together. The largest of these early groups were the Erik Janssonists. (See Chapter 2.)<sup>12</sup>

The majority of those pioneers who made their way to the Smoky Valley of Kansas came in these early groups. The earliest documented pioneers to emigrate from Sweden and eventually reach the Smoky Valley came in 1849. A sizable number immigrated to the United States during the 1850s and a great many more arrived during the decade of the 1860s. Very few of the Galesburg Company immigrants however, had been in the United States for less than a year when they made the decision to establish homes and farms in Kansas.<sup>13</sup>

The emigration groups usually stayed together once they were in the United States. They would settle in the same localities, attend church together, and practice their local Swedish customs collectively. This fact accounts for the individualistic colonies that developed later in the Smoky Valley. The group that founded Lindsborg were Swedes from Chicago. Falun was founded by colonists from Bishop Hill, Illinois. Even within the Galesburg Company two contingents existed. Although the majority of the Galesburg Company people were originally from the province of Småland, Sweden, generally speaking, those who attended Andover, Illinois Lutheran Church founded the Freemount Congregation and those who were associated with First Lutheran Church in Galesburg, Illinois, founded the Salemsberg Congregation.<sup>14</sup>

During the 1840s and 1850s, emigration from Sweden had been relatively slow and was a personal or community decision, rooted in a need for more religious freedom, economic opportunity, or a thirst for adventure. By the late

1860s, however, the reasons for immigration were more likely to include escape from poverty and famine, unemployment and lack of opportunity in Sweden, or a chance to join family and friends already in America. The "Great Emigration" began as thousands of Swedes boarded ships and made their voyage across the stormy Atlantic, leaving their stricken homeland for the hope of a better life in the western lands.

The decade of the 1860s brought years of crop failure and famine to Sweden. These were primary motivational forces resulting in emigration. In the rural areas of Småland, people remember the year 1868 as the "hard year". That summer no real rain fell and the grain never reached the point of forming ears. Bread made from the bark of trees was eaten to survive.

"Many of the very poorest inhabitants of Småland died from malnutrition during those years. For example, it is reported in a chronicle from Langasjo in Kronoberg County, dated the 9th of December, 1868: 'This past week the church bells rang here for ten corpses. Of these, two had starved to death and one frozen to death'.....In the newspaper *Snällposten* from Malmo, for the 5th of May, 1869,....'During these days the city streets have swarmed with immigrants, who are making their way to America.

Last Wednesday, six hundred farm hands and serving girls from Småland arrived here by special train. The immigrants were, almost without exception, young and hearty people."<sup>15</sup>

Kronoberg County, Småland, saw sixty-two thousand persons emigrate between 1850 and 1910. In some parishes more than half the people emigrated. Farms were left

deserted, and in places only the old and decrepit were left behind. All of the young people were leaving for America.<sup>16</sup>

The lure of America was also fueled by "America Letters." These correspondences from friends and relatives already in America were great enticements to emigrate. The newly arrived immigrants wrote back to their home parishes about the free and independent land where a hard-working person could do well if willing to put forth the efforts needed in this raw land.

Most of the letters described the writers in good health and wished the same to the recipient of the letter. Few letters described any difficulties or misfortunes that may have befallen the writer. They mostly depicted the positive experiences in America and sent a message of a wonderful life in the new country. The new land was seldom given any criticism as the emigrant did not want to admit defeat.

Steamship companies and recruiters published pamphlets and leaflets glorifying the wonders of America. Any materials concerning emigration were passed around and widely read in the rural areas of Sweden. These publications described America as the "land of gold" and a place of unlimited opportunity. Greatly exaggerated stories were told and retold in Sweden and the lure of America became overwhelming for many Swedes. When all of the embellishments were stripped away, one basic truth always remained: for

hardworking, capable, and industrious people, America offered greater opportunities than their own native land.<sup>17</sup>

The end of the nineteenth century brought a realization to the Swedish government that most of the talented and capable Swedish people were draining away from the country. Editors and writers perceived the "Great Emigration" as a disaster for Sweden and steps were taken to stop the outflow of emigrants. Eventually the flood of emigrants to America subsided and the talented, creative, and industrious found opportunities and upward social mobility within their own nation.

America, however, remained an integral part of Sweden. A substantial portion of the Swedish born population now resided in the United States. Nearly every Swedish family had relatives in America. In many areas of the United States, the customs of Sweden became locally dominant. The Swedish language was heard on the farm, on the street, and in the churches for decades after immigration was complete.

Emigration to the United States began an impulsive popular movement which eventually became a dire necessity for many people. As more and more Swedes began the emigration process, it became a commercialized and organized business.

Several steamship lines sent representatives to the rural areas to promote emigration and to sell tickets on their ships to America. The promoters worked on commission

and were paid by the number of people they enlisted to emigrate.

Newspapers also started to promote emigration. The steamship lines advertised that the passage could be made more safely and with greater speed than in the earlier sailing vessels. Relatives also sent money back to Sweden to pay for the passage of other family members to join them in America.

In this way, many of those who would have remained in Sweden, unable to rise above the heavy chains of poverty, were compelled to join the rising flood of emigration from their homeland.<sup>18</sup>

The dreams of adventure, freedom, hope, and ambition were repeated often. One poet expressed the thoughts of thousands of his beleaguered countrymen when he wrote:

"västerut, där solen strålar över fria människors  
land  
västerut, där inga trålar kväljas under snöda  
band,  
västerut, där människovärdet varder, erkänt dock  
till slut,  
västerut, där flit ger ära,  
flit ger makt-gå västerut!

Westwards, where the sun shines over the land of  
the free  
Westwards, where no one is enslaved in vile  
chains,  
Westwards, where human worth finally receives its  
reward.  
Westwards, where diligence gives honor,  
diligence gives power-Go Westwards!"<sup>19</sup>



And so they left Sweden. Former soldiers, crofters, landowners, laborers, and people from all walks of life embarked upon the adventure of their lives. Most of these Swedish citizens would never see the shores of their homeland again. After four to eight weeks at sea, under horrendous conditions in the steerage compartments of sailing ships, they would arrive in New York City, Boston, or other points of debarkation. In New York, the Swedish immigrant would pass through the Castle Garden Immigrant Center. Some new arrivals lost their baggage, others lost relatives, and still others received new names at the whim of a bureaucrat.

Bewildered by the medical examinations, a foreign language, a culture they did not understand, documents they could not read, new forms of money, and a vague idea of where they were going, they were cast out into the new land. Railroad agents met them at the door and sold them tickets to destinations such as Chicago, Dekalb, and Galesburg, Illinois. Confidence men accosted them on every corner ready to swindle them out of their every possession. The newly arrived immigrant entered America; a land of opportunity, a land of new hope and faith. They survived, prospered, and left an indelible mark on the fabric of American society.

An unknown writer, perhaps sitting on the afterdeck of a ship and watching his beloved homeland fall below the horizon, composed the following poem. The poem expresses so poignantly the bittersweet farewell to the old country, but

also the hopefulness of a new life in America. The poet bids farewell.

***Emigrantens Avsked***

Farväl o moder Svea! Jog far nu i från dig  
 och tackar dig av hjart att du har fostrat mig  
 Miy bröd du gav sa ringa, det ofta ej förslog  
 Fast mången af den varnan du gifvit mer än nog  
 Nu draga vi some fordome från dig till fjarran land,  
 utover havets vagor, langt bort till Vasterland.  
 Der är ej ont om brödet, när man vill bruka flit-  
 Vi tacka ma upptäckarn, some viste vägen dit.

**The Emigrant's Farewell**

Farewell, oh Mother Sweden!  
 Now I journey away from you  
 And thank you with all my heart that you have fostered me  
 You gave me little bread, often it wasn't enough  
 Although to many people you gave more than they needed.  
 Now as in bygone days we travel to the western land,  
 from you,  
 Over the waves we go, away to foreign shores,  
 Where there is no problem about bread if one applies  
 himself;  
 We must surely thank the explorer who showed us the way  
 here.<sup>20</sup>

## Chapter 2

### By Faith Alone

The movement of Swedes into Saline and McPherson Counties, Kansas, was enormously influenced by the theological and religious controversies raging within the Swedish Lutheran Church in the nineteenth century. The church remained the focal point of these pious, mostly rural, Christians. The course of their lives was dramatically altered by changes in religious feelings and thoughts within the Swedish Lutheran Church.

It is important to look back into the history of the church during this period and define the religious thoughts and controversies at the center of this upheaval. These religious controversies ultimately contributed to the mass emigration from Sweden to America, and then proved to be a major factor in the migration from the upper Midwest to the Great Plains.

The leaders of the Swedish Lutheran Church, who participated in these movements both in Sweden and America, will also be briefly examined for their contributions to the religious upheaval that sent so many people looking for religious freedom in a new land.

The nineteenth century was a time of social and political upheaval and a transitory period for all of

Scandinavia. It was during this century that Sweden emerged from its peasant past and joined the family of nations in the modern era. The entire social structure of Sweden was transformed from a largely rural farming economy to a more urban based system. With such vast changes in society happening around them, the people, especially the lower classes, felt great discontent with the economy, as well as intellectual and spiritual unrest. They began searching for the self-determination and freedom that would not be restricted by the church or the state.

The Lutheran Church of Sweden became steeped in the bureaucratic morass of a state run organization and lost sight of its intended spiritual duties. It was more concerned with its own self-perpetuating institutionalization than the spiritual well-being of the Swedish people. Political considerations and state policy often determined the church's ecclesiastical attitudes and actions. State supported clergy became totally involved with the paperwork and government forms needed to keep state money coming into the church coffers. Unfortunately, this attitude allowed the clergy to lose contact with the church's most important work, the people. Parishes in the rural areas were also so large that it became exceedingly difficult for pastors to visit parishioners and for the rural people to attend worship services regularly.<sup>1</sup>

As a result, the church became so rigid and steeped in formality that it lost sight of the needs of the people,

especially those in the more isolated rural areas of the Swedish countryside. To fill the unmet spiritual needs of Sweden's rural population in the late eighteenth century, there arose in the most isolated areas, a movement whose premise was to return to a more fundamentalist Bible reading form of private worship called the *Lassaie* Movement. Followers of this movement would gather together in private homes, read the Bible and the devotional writings of Martin Luther. They would then read the prayers and confessionals of the church, ask for a benediction and return to their own homes. The *Lassaie* Movement began very quietly, but eventually grew to impact all of Sweden.

This underground spiritual movement was illegal. In Sweden, the policy of state control of the church brought about laws that prohibited the reading of the Bible without the presence of a clergyman. Even though it meant breaking the law, these secret meetings were held and Bible reading flourished despite the efforts of the church and state to retain control.<sup>2</sup>

Before the first quarter of the nineteenth century had passed, revivalism had taken hold in Sweden. Revivalism was in fact the spiritual manifestation of the political, cultural, and economic upheavals that pushed Sweden into the modern world. Spiritual revivalism swept the country and soon developed into a more formalized form known as the Pietistic Movement. Pietism centered on the "emotional and

subjective aspects of the Christian experience and the ethical and moral demands of sanctification."<sup>3</sup>

During this same period in Sweden the most pressing social problem was alcoholism. The lack of spirituality in the church, extreme poverty among the rural population, and a lack of hope, were among the reasons for this problem. Temperance, or the abstinence of drinking alcoholic beverages, became a cause closely associated with the Pietistic Movement. The cause for temperance was headed by Peter Wieselgren of Gothenburg. He formed a society that emphasized total abstinence from drink. The Temperance Movement influenced many people all over the countryside. Wieselgren allied himself with the cause of Revivalism. The two causes together formed a major coalition and proved to be a strong factor for religious and social change in Sweden.<sup>4</sup>

Pietism took many turns and encompassed a number of theological philosophies. Pietistic ideologies took many forms, including those who opposed the emotional and subjective emphasis in religion and stressed the intellectual - to those who preached that religion must be a totally emotional experience. Behind all of these movements were the common people "yearning for the kind of religion that warmed the heart and set the soul on fire with assurance and certainty."<sup>5</sup> Pietism met the needs of the worshiper by giving each of them a very personal religious experience.

The various Pietist movements, as well as the Swedish Lutheran Church, were in need of a strong leader and judicious guidance through these uncharted intellectual and spiritual waters. In the year 1820 George Scott arrived to fill that role. Even though he was a Methodist Missionary from England, he joined right in with the Revivalist Movement. Scott spoke of the repentance of sin, faith in Jesus Christ, and the continual amendment of the believer's life. His church, the Bethlehem Chapel in Stockholm became the center of the revivalist and the associated temperance movements that were rampant in Sweden during this time.

The work of George Scott attracted a young theological student from Uppsala University named Carl Olaf Rosenius. Young Rosenius was struggling with numerous religious doubts. Through Scott's teaching and guidance, Rosenius overcame his doubts and developed into one of the greatest religious leaders Sweden ever produced. When George Scott left Sweden and returned to England in 1842, Carl Rosenius became his successor and the leader of Swedish revivalism for the next twenty-five years. Rosenius published a newspaper, *The Pietisten*, that was read extensively, both in Sweden and in the United States. Through his newspaper, Rosenius became very influential in the ongoing debate over Lutheran thought and theology.

Rosenius' most important associate and friend was Peter Fjellstedt, the renowned preacher, educator, writer and linguist. He has been called the "Passavant of Sweden"

because of his work on behalf of social and foreign missions. Fjellstedt saw himself as the educator of the young men and women who would devote themselves to the missionary cause, and to this end he founded the Fjellstedt School to advance his work. The school was first located in Lund, moved to Stockholm, and then to Uppsala, where it remains to this day.<sup>6</sup>

These religious and social leaders came to the forefront in the debates over philosophical thought and fundamental change in the religious and social fabric of Sweden. They were trying out new ideas and attitudes. Their teachings influenced others to change and become intolerant of the old ways, and to look toward new freedoms of thought and religion. For many Swedes, no longer able to accept the limitations placed upon them by the church and the state, the search for freedom meant emigration.

### **A New Beginning in a New Land**

Religious revivalism reached the height of frustration during the 1840s. The long entrenched state church thwarted every effort of the revivalists to effect even minor changes. The revivalists, seeing little hope for a revision of church policy, began to think about leaving Sweden in their quest for religious freedom. People discussed the prospect of emigrating to America, but as yet few were serious and only a handful actually left.



The first attempt by a significantly large group to leave Sweden came in 1846. This assemblage was led by the religious zealot, Eric Janson, a man of eccentric character and violent temperament. He was considered a radical separatist who gave up farming in 1840 and declared himself a lay evangelist. Janson firmly believed he had a special revelation from God and all who believed his message would win salvation, while all others would be condemned to the furnaces of hell. Not surprisingly, he was soon having difficulty with the church and the law. Harassed by the police, he escaped for a while to Norway, but later returned to Sweden. Seeking freedom to practice his religion safely away from his persecutors, Janson gathered his followers and left Sweden in 1846. These "Jansonites" came to America and settled at Bishop Hill, the so-called "New Jerusalem" on the plains of western Illinois. During the course of the next two years, approximately fifteen hundred of Janson's followers joined him there.

Janson's first colony at Bishop Hill, Illinois, was a communistic type of communal society. Janson used his power and dictatorial control to rule the colony harshly, relying on his visions for guidance and his personal will for authority. For most of its life the colony was economically very weak. Janson continued to exert his personal control over the colonies' money as well as the lives of his people. Eventually, this abuse of power led to the leader's death.<sup>7</sup>

Janson temporarily left Bishop Hill to live in St. Louis using the colony's meager funds. He was involved in a long lasting feud with the husband of his cousin, a man named John Ruth (Root). The difficulty arose over Janson's hypocrisy in his dealings with the colonies' monies and his dictatorial authority over the people's lives. Janson was in Cambridge, Illinois to testify at a trial concerning the colony's financial matters. As the court recessed for the noon break, Root approached Janson and demanded that he release his (Root's) wife and son from Janson's control. Janson replied with words that further infuriated Root. At that moment a pistol shot rang out and Janson slumped to the floor. Within five minutes he was dead. The Cambridge Court recorded under Case Number 16 for May 13, 1850, the words: "Death of defendant suggested and case continued."<sup>8</sup>

The death of Erik Janson greatly weakened the colony. Others tried to assume the leadership role but no one could match the force and will of the colony's original founder. The group continued to dwindle as many of its members drifted off to join other newly formed Swedish communities in western Illinois. By the year 1860, Bishop Hill Colony collapsed and the experiment in communal living ended.<sup>9</sup>

Significantly, the Bishop Hill Colony had become a beacon by which other Swedish groups took their bearings. Most of the Swedes who followed these early Jansonite pioneers came to western Illinois. Large numbers of Swedes built homes and businesses in neighboring communities.

Illinois became the jumping off point for migrations to Minnesota, Iowa, and eventually on to the Great Plains. By the year 1848, "America Fever" had taken hold in Sweden. With the exception of the Bishop Hill Colony and a small settlement of Swedes on the Skunk River called New Sweden in Iowa, no one large assemblage of Swedes had emigrated from their homeland.

A minister from northern Sweden by the name of Lars Paul Esbjörn became influential and deeply affected the cause of Lutheranism in both Sweden and America. Esbjörn was deeply involved in the evangelical, revivalism, and temperance movements and by the 1840s had established himself as a clergyman of exceptional ability. He was profoundly influenced by the writings and work of Scott and Rosenius. Esbjörn was a very complex man: morose, stubborn, of strong convictions, shy, egocentric, and prone to depressions. Yet he also exhibited great courage, wisdom, faith, and the ability to lead others to a new land.

Early in 1849, Esbjörn announced his intention to lead a group of Swedes to America, including most of his own congregation. Some applauded this venture, but most believed it to be risky and foolhardy. Differing views included:

"Here is a real shepherd of the common people who casts his lot with the underdog!...The man must be crazy! Esbjörn is a man of courage and vision who will not forsake his countrymen across the broad Atlantic! Esbjörn is an irresponsible adventurer who brazenly entices his flock to forsake their beloved homeland! Esbjörn is a

modern Moses who leads his people out of the land of bondage into Canaan! Esbjörn is a blind leader of the blind!"<sup>10</sup>

The Swedish Lutheran Church finally gave him permission to leave for America while continuing his ministerial work, but they refused him any financial support. Many of his fellow clergymen considered him an "irresponsible fanatic." In America, Esbjörn and his flock would be on their own.

On June 29, 1849, Lars Esbjörn, his wife, six children (including infant twin sons), along with one hundred and forty-six followers, left Gävle, Sweden, on a voyage to the new world. The ocean voyage was extremely difficult as cholera plagued them throughout the entire journey. Many of those courageous Swedes who began the trip succumbed to this dreadful disease. Included among the dead were both of Lars Esbjörn's infant sons.<sup>11</sup>

Among the pioneers who accompanied Esbjörn to America was Anders Peter Larson and his family. During the weeks at sea, Anders watched his wife, son and daughter succumb to cholera. Only Anders and his daughter, Anna, managed to survive.<sup>12</sup>

The Esbjörn party disembarked in New York City and entered the United States through the Castle Garden Immigrant Center. They then traveled by railroad on to Chicago. Cholera plagued them throughout this journey also.

While in Chicago, Esbjörn procured lands near the Bishop Hill Colony in western Illinois. He was promised beautiful land, already developed, next to a navigable river.

When the Swedes arrived at their townsite they found not the beautiful community of their dreams, but a few miserable shacks on the banks of the Edwards River, which was actually a small muddy creek. Undaunted, Esbjörn and his followers settled in the town of Andover, Illinois. The first few months in Illinois were difficult and the Andover Colony persisted largely through the courage and personal will of Pastor Esbjörn. Despite terrible hardships, devastating sickness, and numerous deaths, the colony survived.<sup>13</sup>

After hearing of the initial success of the Andover Colony, many newly arriving Swedes decided to join the growing Swedish population in the American Midwest. Before long, hopeful Swedish immigrants flooded existing towns and cities and some even founded new communities. In Iowa, such towns as Swede Bend, and Bergholm, joined New Sweden as Swedish centers of population. Moline, Dekalb, Rock Island, Galesburg, Rockford, Swedona, Andover and Chicago counted a large percentage of Swedish born residents among their populations. Other states including Pennsylvania, Indiana, and especially Minnesota also became the destinations for hundreds of Swedish immigrants.

Pastor Esbjörn founded the First Lutheran Church in Andover and then established Swedish Lutheran congregations throughout the region. First Lutheran of Andover was the first Swedish Lutheran Church established in America since the founding of Fort Christina, Delaware Colony, during the middle of the seventeenth century.<sup>14</sup> By 1851, several successful Swedish congregations had been established, and they joined together with Lutherans from Norwegian, German, and American congregations to form the Synod of Northern Illinois. The Swedish congregations now had a synod to bind them together with other nationalities, but they kept their distance and distinctive Swedish identity. The new synod also established a training ground for new pastors at Springfield, Illinois. Pastor Esbjörn was very instrumental in the founding of the new school, Illinois State University.<sup>15</sup>

Esbjörn was a man of extraordinary energy, devoted to God and the spiritual welfare of his people. As the ranks of Swedish settlers swelled, Pastor Esbjörn sent the call to some of his former colleagues in Sweden encouraging them to join him on this new spiritual front. One of the most important early congregations to be founded by Pastor Esbjörn was First Lutheran Church of Galesburg, Illinois. With Esbjörn's guiding influence, First Lutheran called Tuve Nilson Hasselquist from Sweden to become its first pastor. Hasselquist was a former student of Dr. Fjellstedt who instilled in him the belief that God's greatest work was

done on the missionary frontier. He accepted the call and proved to be a man of great ability, outgoing, a flexible leader, and an inexhaustible worker. He was a tall, powerfully built man in the prime of his life. He became the very embodiment of the church which he served.<sup>16</sup> As one writer stated: "If ever there was a man for the place, it was Hasselquist."<sup>17</sup>

Pastor Hasselquist arrived in Galesburg in October of 1852, and immediately went to work building First Lutheran into one of the finest Lutheran spiritual centers in the Midwest. Hasselquist, with the loyal support and ready assistance of First Lutheran, traveled widely and worked to found numerous Lutheran congregations in many of the ever expanding Swedish communities.

This new pastor of First Lutheran held a much freer attitude about the Lutheran Church than most of his fellow clergymen. He was very flexible about the use of the liturgy within the Lutheran church service, and was a supporter of the Pietist and the Temperance Movements. Hasselquist also freely cooperated with other church denominations in many areas. All of these attitudes and activities of Hasselquist later proved very important in shaping the course of the Lutheran Church in America.<sup>18</sup>

Hasselquist also found the time and energy to establish the first Swedish-American newspaper in the United States: *Det Rätta Hemlandet*, which translated means appropriately "The Correct Homeland." It was an extremely

important link between all of the Swedish immigrant pioneers in America. Written in the Swedish language, it contained American news, reports from the various Swedish communities in America, news from the homeland, and always spiritual guidance from the pen of Hasselquist himself. Businesses often advertised in the Swedish newspaper. As the Swedish community in America grew, both Swedish and American businessmen realized there were great advantages to reaching this expanding market in the Swedish language. The *Hemlandet* was widely read and in many cases was one of the only links a Swede had with the old country.<sup>19</sup>

The second man to answer the call to minister to the needs of Swedish Lutherans in America was Pastor Erland Carlsson. Born in Småland in the year 1822, Carlsson was considered by many to be a free church radical, and opportunities for his advancement were closing because of his perceived radicalism. One of the many students of Dr. Peter Fjellstedt instilled with the missionary fervor, Carlsson accepted the call of the newly formed Immanuel Lutheran Church in Chicago. Pastor Carlsson served his parish with great distinction for twenty-two years, all the while giving aid to the masses of new Swedish immigrants that arrived in Chicago each year. A tireless worker, Carlsson ministered extensively to the countless cholera sufferers in Chicago. Meeting every new train load of Swedish immigrants, he assisted each one to establish a steady foothold in the new land.<sup>20</sup>



Jonas Swensson and Olaf Christian Telemark Andrén accepted calls from Esbjörn's Swedish Lutheran congregations in America. Both of these men were also graduates of the Fjellstedt school. Pastor Swensson, who emigrated from Småland in 1856, accepted the call of Swedish congregations in Sugar Grove and Jamestown, New York, and in 1858 replaced Esbjörn as the pastor of First Lutheran in Andover, Illinois. O.C.T. Andrén also arrived in America in 1856 and answered the call to minister to the Swedes of Moline, Illinois.

These five clergymen became the great leaders of the Swedish Lutheran Church in America. Their attitudes, policies, and leadership would shape the course of the Lutheran Church for many decades to come. Their founding influence remains the cornerstone in the work and doctrines of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, even today.

The first of the many outstanding pastors who were ordained in America was Eric Norelius. Norelius' main pastoral work was among the Swedish settlements in Minnesota. However, he worked throughout the Lutheran Church in America and became well respected and renowned for his conservative thinking and resolute efforts. Norelius worked tirelessly as the historian and archivist for the Swedish Lutheran Church. His papers and writings concerning the history of the Swedish people and Lutheranism in America are of profound importance to church history and the development of Lutheran church doctrine.<sup>21</sup>

During the decade of the 1850s a small, but steadily growing stream of immigrants joined their countrymen in the flourishing cities of Illinois. Cities such as Chicago, Rock Island, and Galesburg developed "Little Swedens" or "Swedish Quarters" where the Swedish language was heard more frequently than English. The Swedes were industrious, ambitious, and not afraid of hard work. Those who arrived as skilled craftsmen and tradesmen were especially desired.

Julius Esping, a former sailor in the Swedish merchant marine, emigrated from Sweden in 1852 with his large family. The Espings settled in Geneva, Illinois, where Julius plied his trade as an anchormith. Over the next few years, Esping became a leader in the community and was well regarded by his neighbors.<sup>22</sup> Most of the earlier Swedish immigrants, like Esping, established themselves successfully and became good productive citizens in their communities.

As immigration expanded, a need for more Lutheran ministers to meet the growing spiritual demands of America's Swedish population became apparent. During the year 1859, an exceptional young man, only seventeen years old, and not yet finished with his schooling, answered the call to the Lutheran ministry in America. His name was Anders Wilhelm Dahlsten. Young Anders Dahlsten was a man of average height and slight build, but in his eyes there shone the quiet intensity of his faith and the strength of determination that was the essence of his character. He was born on November 7, 1836, in the parish of NÅshult, Småland, Sweden,

the fourth of eight children. His father was a poor farm laborer who died while Anders was still quite young. A gifted student, Dahlsten attended the parish school at Näsht, and later gained admission to the Fjellstedt Mission School in Stockholm. While at the mission school, he studied intensely with Dr. Fjellstedt, and there gained the passion for the missionary field like so many before him.<sup>23</sup>

While a student at the Fjellstedt school, Dahlsten was a classmate of Lindsborg's future founder, Olof Olsson. Olsson was five years younger than Dahlsten, but the two young men were close friends during their school days. Both Olsson and Dahlsten left school in the spring of 1859. Dahlsten sailed for America while Olsson continued his studies in Sweden. The two schoolmates lost contact with each other for a number of years. When their friendship resumed a decade later, it was on the plains of Kansas.<sup>24</sup>

Pastor Esbjörn sent word to Dr. Fjellstedt that the Swedish Lutheran churches in America were in dire need of pastors. Fjellstedt wrote back to Esbjörn recommending one of his most outstanding students, A. W. Dahlsten. Dr. Fjellstedt was so sure that his young scholar would be an outstanding success as a missionary pastor, that he offered to pay the young man's passage to America. Dahlsten accepted the commission and left his native Sweden for the United States early in 1859.

Forty-four years later, A. W. Dahlsten wrote an article for the fiftieth anniversary album of the Immanuel

Lutheran Church in Chicago. The letter described Dahlsten's first experiences in America. Dahlsten wrote:

"When my traveling companion, afterwards the Reverend G. Peters, and I arrived in Chicago from Sweden, Immanuel Congregation was six years old. We were heartily welcomed by Pastor Erland Carlsson and his family, who then lived on the second floor of the next house east from the Swedish Church on Superior Street. Oh, how good it felt to a stranger, so far away, to be fraternally welcome. It shall always be one of my fondest memories.

The following Sunday after our arrival, the tenth Sunday after Trinity, was for me a memorable day. How beautiful after the long trip to be allowed to visit God's temple. I also had the pleasure to teach a class in Sunday School and afterwards to hear the pastor's encouraging speech to the school. When services began the church was full with loving fellow countrymen. A happy sight for a stranger. Organist C. J. Anderson performed psalm 325 and the congregation sang 'O How Sweet Is' etc. It feels home like. Pastor Carlsson's sermon: 'About Jesus' tears over Jerusalem' was serious and moving. Not only many listeners eyes became tear springs that day but even the teachers eyes watered. We are reminded that the years 1858-1859 were especially mercifully visited in Chicago and elsewhere....

Some weeks after our arrival we got to accompany Pastor Carlsson to a cherished conference meeting in Geneva. There we made a new and unforgettable circle of acquaintances. The conference consisted of the Swedish Lutheran congregations and their pastors, which belonged to the Northern Illinois Synod.

In Geneva, I became acquainted for the first time with; Prof. L. P. Esbjörn, Pastors T. N. Hasselquist, O.C.T. Andrén, Jonas Swensson, and A. Andreen with family. I thank God for this circle of acquaintances.

Hasselquist's and O. C. T. Andrén's sermons were especially enjoyable to me. It, however, made me wonder greatly that they did not wear pastor's attire. It was hot, therefore clothing use decreased. Wise enough! The old simple stone church and Pastor Carlsson's house stands vividly

in my memory. In Geneva the determination (was made) that I should continue my studies in Springfield, Ill.

After returning from Springfield that spring of 1860, I held parish school in the Immanuel congregation. It was for me a dear school. I was preaching some times and often conducting devotions while in the house and also helped Pastor Carlsson with manifold emigrant tasks. Carlsson was a true emigrant missionary of the era, although his health was frail.

He was pastor and had a rather exacting organist, was each emigrant's counselor and helper, and also editor for the *Hemlandet's* ecclesiastical section. Besides, he did much work with students and their support. Yes, what was it that Pastor Carlsson would not do? Almost all emigrants were referred to him.

So Immanuel's congregation was the only Swedish Lutheran parish in Chicago, but Pastor Carlsson was also the Geneva parish's pastor. I often preached there. There were many at the time who thought that the Swedish Lutheran pastors were only temporary and soon should be uprooted.

Even the Swedish Methodists thought so and they also did all they could to that direction. We were then, the little, weak and small crowd, but we have kept God's word and therefore He occasionally has made us great.

Let us praise his holy name."

A. W. Dahlsten<sup>25</sup>

That fall, Dahlsten went to Springfield, Illinois to study with Professor Esbjörn at Illinois State University. While in the seminary at Illinois State, Dahlsten proved to be a brilliant scholar and leader among his peers. Through his outstanding accomplishments, he was soon considered one of the best young pastors who would soon join the work of the church in Illinois.<sup>26</sup>

## The Rise of the Augustana Synod

As the 1850s ended, a significant population of Swedish born people were living in many communities of Illinois and the surrounding states. The Swedish Lutheran churches were growing and new ones were founded each year. Ten years earlier, when the Swedish population was small and its churches were few, Pastor Esbjörn had aligned the Swedish Lutheran churches with the Americanized Norwegians to give his fledgling churches some stability. This predominately Norwegian group was called the Synod of Northern Illinois. However, by 1860, the Swedish and Norwegian members of the Synod increasingly were disagreeing on matters of policy, doctrine and leadership.

Eric Norelius, in Minnesota, questioned the validity and wisdom of having joined with the Norwegians in the first place. He was fermenting for an all Swedish Synod. Erland Carlsson and T. N. Hasselquist were much more at ease with Americanization, the Norwegians, and any changes that needed to be made. They felt that compromise could re-establish harmonious relations with the Norwegian members of the Synod.

The most significant problem in the synod centered around Esbjörn and Illinois State University. Esbjörn was teaching the theology classes from the Swedish Lutheran point of view. The foreign language stressed was Swedish and not Norwegian. Not surprisingly, the Norwegians showed

little interest in the school and even less financial support for the professorship of Lars Esbjörn. Indignant, Esbjörn resigned his professorship at Illinois State which underscored the rapidly growing tensions between Swedes and Norwegians.

Not only was a rift developing between the Swedes and Norwegians, but the Norwegians were showing great strains among themselves. The Swedes too were disagreeing over Synod affairs. Esbjörn was fully supported by Norelius. Hasselquist and Carlsson agreed with each other on most points but usually disagreed with Esbjörn and Norelius. The Synod of Northern Illinois began to unravel.<sup>26</sup>

Finally, a convention was called to deal with the problems of the growing rift in the Synod of Northern Illinois. The delegates convened at Jefferson Prairie, Wisconsin, on June 5, 1860. Twenty-six pastors and fifteen laymen were present for the meeting. The majority of the delegates were Swedish, as were the majority of the congregations in the synod. All the prominent Lutheran pastors were in attendance, including Esbjörn, Norelius, Carlsson, Hasselquist, Andrén, and Jonas Swenson.

In a move strongly supported by Esbjörn and Norelius, the Swedish delegates to the convention soon decided to withdraw from the Synod of Northern Illinois and form their own synod. Esbjörn still felt snubbed by the lack of support from the Norwegians for losing his professorship at Illinois State University. The delegates set to work, drew up a new

constitution and prepared for the future under the umbrella of a new Augustana Synod. The Swedish delegates abandoned the school at Springfield to the Norwegians and established the new Augustana Seminary in Chicago.<sup>27</sup>

Pastor Esbjörn was awarded the Presidency of the Augustana Seminary and also the position of Professor of Theology. T. N. Hasselquist became the first President of the Augustana Synod while still retaining his pastorate at First Lutheran in Galesburg.

Esbjörn was assisted by his friend Erland Carlsson in Chicago. Through the first formative years these eminently able men provided great strength and leadership assuring the success of this new synod and the Swedish Lutheran Church in the United States.

By the year 1862, Pastor Lars Esbjörn had lost his position of preeminent leadership in the Augustana Synod, and younger, stronger men were taking over the yokes of responsibility and leadership. His time had passed. The years of toil and hardship had taken its toll, but one final blow still remained. Esbjörn received word that his son, Paul, a Union soldier, had been killed at the Battle of Lexington, Missouri.<sup>28</sup> He began to feel homesickness and longed for the easier life and security of his native Sweden. For these reasons, Esbjörn decided to take leave of his work here in America and return to his native land. He applied for and received the post of chief pastor at Ostervåla in Hälsingland. After fourteen years of pioneering



service to the Lutheran Church in Illinois, Pastor Lars Esbjörn returned to Sweden.<sup>29</sup>

The Lutheran Church and the first Swedish immigrants took root and grew in the New World largely as a result of the great courage, indomitable faith, hard work, and pioneering spirit of this great man. All those Americans whose heritage is Swedish, remain forever in his debt.

The Augustana Synod met to choose new leaders to succeed the retiring Lars Esbjörn. The synod chose Erland Carlsson to be the new synod president. T. N. Hasselquist was chosen as the temporary President of the Augustana Seminary until a new theologian could be found in Sweden to take the position. Hasselquist remained in that "temporary" position until his death in 1891.<sup>30</sup>

When called to serve as seminary president, Hasselquist resigned from his position at First Lutheran in Galesburg. This church was one of the most prominent in the synod. The pastor chosen to occupy this pulpit would also inherit great prestige and power. Many applied for this coveted position, but instead of choosing one of the senior pastors of great reputation, First Lutheran chose one of the most promising of the young pastors serving in the synod. The name of the successful candidate: A. W. Dahlsten.

## Chapter 3

### The Search for Land

The years between 1860 and 1870 were pivotal to the development of Swedish culture in the United States. Before 1860, the flow of immigrants was small but steadily growing. After 1860, especially the years following the end of the American Civil War, the ever increasing number of immigrants from Sweden became a flood into the United States.

Most of the Swedes who immigrated before 1860 had established homes, farms, businesses, and became successful and productive members of their communities. Many received their American citizenship and had assumed roles of responsibility in their communities. They also became involved in the politics and issues confronting the United States during the 1850s. The approaching Civil War was very much on their minds and often debated among themselves. Their Swedish background of repression and limited freedoms had been a constant concern in Sweden. This gave them ample reasons to support the northern states in their rejection of slavery. The Swedes almost exclusively sided with the north because of this issue. This is evident from the fact that less than fifty Swedes are known to have fought for the Confederate Army during the war. Of the approximately twenty thousand Swedes living in the United States at the beginning

of the Civil War, nearly three thousand of these men enlisted in the Union Army.

The Swedish men were good soldiers. Many were veterans of the Swedish Army with previous military training. Even those who had no prior military training adapted well to the rigorous army life. The majority of the Swedish soldiers mustered into Union regiments were from Illinois and Minnesota.<sup>1</sup>

Three regiments from Illinois listed many Swedes on their company rosters. The 43rd Illinois Infantry was raised in 1861 in Galesburg during the early months of the Civil War. Company C, commanded by Captain Carl Arosenius, was made up almost entirely of men of Swedish birth. The roster of Company C includes John Gust Anderson, and Julius, Axel, and Carl Esping. The Anderson and Esping families later were pioneers in the Smoky Valley.<sup>2</sup>

The same year, a second company of Swedes was recruited by Captain Eric Forsee at Bishop Hill. Captain Forsee had been an officer in the Swedish Army before he left Sweden in 1854. He came to America with the intention of joining the Bishop Hill Colony to enjoy the religious freedom that was available there. The company that Captain Forsee organized was eventually incorporated into the 57th Infantry Regiment as Company D.<sup>3</sup>

The third and most important of the Swedish military units in the Union Army was the 55th Infantry Regiment. The regiment was almost entirely composed of the sons of Sweden

recruited from the Galesburg vicinity. The regimental commander was Colonel Oscar Malmberg, a graduate of the Swedish Military Academy and a prominent army officer in Sweden. He provided distinguished and outstanding service to the Union cause throughout the Civil War.

All three of these regiments were assigned to the Army of the Tennessee under the command of General U. S. Grant. They participated in the capture of Forts Henry and Donelson and the Battle of Shiloh. The 43rd Infantry was on the front line during the brutal first day of fighting at Shiloh, and withstood numerous casualties before being ordered to retreat.

The 43rd, 55th, and 57th Infantry Regiments also participated in the Siege of Vicksburg in May and June of 1863. After this Union victory, the three Swedish units were transferred to different theaters of war. The 43rd was assigned to garrison duty in Arkansas. The 55th and 57th followed the Army of the Tennessee to Chattanooga and on to the Battle of Atlanta.

Near Atlanta, the commander of the 57th was killed and as senior surviving officer, Eric Forsee was promoted to major and given command of the 57th Infantry. He led the 57th through General William T. Sherman's March to the Sea Campaign in the fall of 1864 and served with honor and distinction. The last engagement of the 57th was at the Battle of Bentonville, North Carolina. Following this Union victory, Confederate General Joseph Johnston was forced to

surrender his army to Union General Sherman. Within days General Robert E. Lee also surrendered his forces to Union General Grant at Appomattox Courthouse in Virginia and the Civil War was over.<sup>4</sup>

As the war ended, most regiments were mustered out of the service. Many Swedish veterans returned to their homes in Galesburg and their church, First Lutheran. When they arrived, they found things had changed. Former Pastor Hasselquist was gone and in his place was the young energetic pastor, A. W. Dahlsten.

### **Dahlsten's Ministry in Illinois**

Anders Wilhelm Dahlsten was a member of the first graduating class of the Augustana Seminary in Chicago, Class of 1861. When Pastor Esbjörn resigned from Illinois State, Dahlsten and six other Swedish seminary students followed him to the new school. While in school, young Dahlsten was very active in school and church activities. One of his classmates, Gustaf Esping<sup>5</sup>, introduced the young seminarian to his sister, Wilhemina. She was the daughter of Julius Esping of Geneva, Illinois, and a sister to Hulda, wife of the prominent young Lutheran Pastor A. Andreen. Dahlsten had often preached at Geneva during his internship with Erland Carlsson in Chicago. The Espings were certainly acquainted with young Dahlsten, but Gustaf had provided the formal introduction between Anders and Wilhemina. They soon married

and formed a lifelong loving relationship that flourished through many hardships and difficulties.<sup>6</sup>

Even before graduation, Dahlsten became a candidate for the position of pastor of the Swedish Lutheran Church in Rockford, Illinois. The previous pastor was Dahlsten's new brother-in-law, Reverend A. Andreen. He had accepted a position to minister to the congregation in Attica, Indiana.

On January 3, 1861, the church held a meeting to elect a new pastor. The candidates were Reverend J. F. Duwell, A. W. Dahlsten, and Reverend G. Peters, Dahlsten's old friend and traveling companion when the two first came to America from Sweden. The electors eliminated Duwell and the choice came down to the two old friends. "Twice, Peters and Dahlsten received almost the same number of votes and when the election was decided by drawing lots, the choice fell to Dahlsten."<sup>7</sup>

Upon graduating from the seminary, newly ordained Pastor Dahlsten took up his post in Rockford. He received a salary of two hundred and fifty dollars and the use of a parsonage. During his three years at Rockford, the work of the church progressed quietly and steadily. The economic condition of the church also improved during the Dahlsten years.<sup>8</sup>

Pastor Dahlsten was also gaining respect and admiration in his quiet way. When the Reverend T. N. Hasselquist resigned his position at First Lutheran Church to become President of the Augustana Synod, he recommended

Pastor Dahlsten to replace him. First Lutheran Church in Galesburg was a church of great distinction in the synod and they had the ability to call any of the older, noteworthy pastors to occupy their pulpit, but instead they followed Hasselquist's advice and chose Dahlsten for this prestigious position.

In December of 1863, Pastor Dahlsten resigned from his parish in Rockford and accepted the call to First Lutheran in Galesburg. He continued to preach three Sundays a month in Rockford and one in Galesburg until the spring of 1864, when he moved to Galesburg permanently.<sup>9</sup>

Pastor Dahlsten found a great deal of work to be done in the congregation. His first priority was to improve the *Församlingens Skol* (Congregation School). He worked to raise money, hire teachers, and provide the education the Swedish children in his parish would need in their new lives in America. His most noteworthy work in his first years at Galesburg, was his efforts to close the saloons and dance clubs that were popular in the city.<sup>10</sup>

Dahlsten's background from Sweden, and especially the influence of his old teacher, Dr. Fjellstedt, motivated his interest in the temperance movement. With drinking and alcoholism such a problem within his congregation, it was natural for him and the church council to crusade against saloons. This campaign, although not very successful, brought him notoriety and made him a leading citizen among the Swedish population of Galesburg.

As the Civil War ended, two major problems appeared that would greatly affect Pastor Dahisten's life, and profoundly affect the settlement of the Smoky Valley of Kansas. The first problem was rising unemployment caused by the return of the war veterans, and the simultaneous influx of thousands of newly arrived Swedish immigrants to Illinois. The second problem centered around the emergence of a new religious fundamentalism arriving with the latest immigrants.

Statistics show that between 1860 and 1865, 10,429 people emigrated from Sweden to the United States. Between the years 1866-1870, the emigration rate rose to 80,491.<sup>11</sup> This great influx of immigration was largely due to famine conditions in Sweden. Many who had purchased lands and acquired mortgages went bankrupt from the fall of agricultural commodity prices. Day laborers who depended on farm work for their living were jobless. Simultaneously, crop failures brought hunger and then famine. The failed potato crops in 1865, 1866 and 1867, left no choice for the poor but to move to a new place in order to survive. Not only did the United States receive many Swedish immigrants, but Germany and Denmark accepted countless Swedish refugees. When conditions improved in subsequent years, most of those who emigrated to other European countries returned to their homeland. Generally, those who emigrated to the United States stayed.<sup>12</sup>



Most of the Scandinavian immigrants who came to America during the 1860s made their way to the Swedish settlements in the Midwest, especially those in Illinois and Minnesota. These states were the final destinations of so many because nearly all of the Swedes had a relative, friend, or the friend of a friend to greet them and help them get started in the new land. Those who arrived in Galesburg, Illinois were directed to Pastor Dahlsten at the First Lutheran Church.

Pastor Dahlsten worked very hard to help the newly arrived immigrants. He had learned well from working with Pastor Erland Carlsson at Immanuel Lutheran in Chicago, and all who came to Galesburg soon learned that Dahlsten was there to help them. At the church, they could receive a meal, perhaps locate an acquaintance from Sweden, or enroll their children in the *Församlingens Skol*. They could also receive help in finding a place to stay or even a tip about a job. Most importantly, these immigrants could find a sympathetic ear, spiritual guidance and relief from the grief that accompanied them on their long arduous journey from Sweden.

Many accounts of the passage from Sweden, both written and oral, refer to the loss of a family member on the journey. Usually the deaths were of children, but sometimes the husband or wife would be lost. The burial would be at sea, with only a few words spoken. Often these tales of

deaths were vivid and tragic memories that remained with the immigrants throughout their lives.

The question of Atonement, or who pays for sin, became a central theme of controversy in the Swedish Lutheran Church during the years, 1868-1876. This issue fueled a new fundamentalist attitude among many Lutherans and it especially became an issue at First Lutheran during Dahlsten's ministry there.

When Reverend T. N. Hasselquist was pastor at First Lutheran, the structure of the worship service was flexible and easily changed to fit the conditions of the congregation, or to accommodate the special activities planned for a particular service. The congregation at First Lutheran included people from many different subcultures and regions of Sweden. They became very comfortable with the informality and accommodation to all that Hasselquist practiced. He had also allowed for the concessions of Americanization to many practices.<sup>13</sup>

When Pastor Dahlsten entered the Lutheran ministry, he was very young, conservative, and steeped in the formal traditions of the church. Yet at the same time he was influenced by the Pietist, Temperance and Revivalist Movements of his native Sweden. He may also have been somewhat unbending to changing circumstances and needs within his congregation. He practiced a formal worship service and had no toleration for any change in the order of liturgy. Many parishioners were uncomfortable with his

inflexibility in this matter. Dahlsten saw God as mighty, powerful and severe - ready to cast his judgment upon his people. This attitude mirrored that of the Lutheran Church in Sweden.

Among the newly arrived immigrants in Dahlsten's congregation were many who were at odds with this orthodox Lutheran philosophy. The state church in Sweden was very intolerant of any variations in doctrine. Many persons could no longer live and worship under these conditions and chose to immigrate to the United States where religious freedom was tolerated. The dissenters came to be called "hyperevangelicals."

The Hyperevangelical Movement was becoming a force in the Lutheran Church. The hyperevangelicals wanted a more liberal translation of scripture. They also wanted to forego the traditional liturgical formality, and focus on a more fundamental attitude in the church based on Bible reading and informal devotional services.

Upon the death of C. O. Rosenius, (See Chapter 2), in 1868, this doctrinal struggle within the Lutheran Church erupted, both in Sweden and the United States. Paul P. Waldenstrom assumed the editorship of the religious journal, *Pietisten*. His writings in this journal hinted at a major change in the way many were looking at the concept of God. Basically, this new doctrine stated that God was not angry at sinners; that Jesus did not need to be man's advocate before God; Christ becomes God's advocate for man. In other

ords, God in all his loving grace would atone for the sins of man through Jesus Christ. Man need not atone and find forgiveness in a vengeful God. God could be viewed as a loving father and not as an unmerciful judge. This Doctrine of Atonement was not revealed in its entirety until 1872 in *The Pietisten*. However, its ramifications were already being felt in 1868 in Galesburg.

From his pulpit, Dahlsten preached of the judgment of sinners through the words of the Old Testament. Although many in his congregation agreed with his doctrine, others were beginning to view God as the loving, gentle savior of men found in the New Testament.<sup>14</sup>

This movement first took root at Immanuel Lutheran in Chicago. Soon, however, it found willing listeners in the other Lutheran Churches in Illinois, especially at First Lutheran in Galesburg.<sup>15</sup>

Many of the dissenters also became dissatisfied with the ritualistic way in which Dahlsten conducted services, and began to gather in homes for private devotional services led by laymen. The pastor delivered impassioned sermons against this practice but only seemed to split the church further. When the dissenters protested to the synod, Hasselquist and two other ministers were sent to Galesburg to "reprimand the rebellious church and admonish it to remain true to Lutheran doctrines and usages."<sup>16</sup> Most of the members submitted and the turmoil subsided for the present.

Soon after this incident, a lay preacher named Bergensköld, recently arrived from Sweden, came to Galesburg. His friends asked Dahlsten if he could be allowed to preach occasionally at the church. When Pastor Dahlsten refused him the pulpit, the devotional services began again. Troubled by the spread of this "New Evangelism" in his church, the pastor called in Hasselquist and Carlson from Chicago, and Swensson from Andover to again reprimand the dissenters.<sup>17</sup>

With the demands of an ever increasing number of immigrants at the door, and the needs in the school, the present church building structure, built in 1853, was too small and poorly built to meet the needs of the congregation. A plan to build a new edifice was commissioned and presented to the congregation. The new church was to be 100 feet by 60 feet and would be crowned by a single tall spire. With all of the controversy surrounding the young pastor and the issues dividing the church, only four hundred dollars could be raised. The project was abandoned for the time being, much to the disappointment of Pastor Dahlsten.<sup>18</sup>

### **The Galesburg Colonization Company**

The Swedes in Illinois were experiencing great economic difficulty. Land near the Swedish settlements was already under production, or else very expensive to purchase. In the urban areas, the competition for any job

available was intense, thereby keeping wages low. The immigrants who came expecting many opportunities soon became disheartened. This was not at all the America that had been advertised by the steamship companies or read about so many times in the "America letters."

John Danielson came to Illinois in 1854 with his fiancée, Matilda Mattson, and her family. They settled in Dekalb, where John took any work he could find, even taking down trees and chopping wood. Finally, after scrimping and saving every penny, he bought a small farm, married Matilda, and started to make a good living.<sup>19</sup>

Jacob Anderson immigrated with his family in 1858. He found work in Galesburg as a night watchman. Ten years later, Jacob had not been able to improve his meager situation and he still remained at his watchman's job.<sup>20</sup>

The Holmkvist family of Dekalb, Illinois also displayed the problems common to the Swedish immigrants of the mid 1860s. Johannes, his fiancée, Lena Pherson, his brother, Olaf and his wife, Anna, and his younger brother, Gust, arrived from Skätelov Parish, Kronoberg County, Sweden, in the spring of 1865, during the final days of the Civil War. They traveled west, and by coincidence were in Springfield, Illinois on the day of Abraham Lincoln's funeral. That same day, Johannes and Lena were married. Lena wore to her wedding and Lincoln's funeral procession a dress that she had made from her mother's tablecloth.<sup>21</sup> They settled in Dekalb, but Johannes and Gust could not find work

ere. Lena, now pregnant, was left in Dekalb and the others traveled to Redwing, Minnesota to look for work in the lumber camps there. Over the next three years, they were mostly absent from home while Lena managed John's growing family alone.<sup>22</sup>

All three families displayed the problems that the Swedes faced. The earliest families found some opportunities and usually became successful. Later families, such as the Andersons, found the job market saturated. Success eluded them in many instances and even the possibilities of advancing were difficult if not impossible. By the mid 1860s, unemployment was very high and newcomers found it almost impossible to find work. Families suffered great hardships but yet somehow survived. They knew opportunities existed somewhere and it was time to strike out and find them. These people were mostly farmers and they were eagerly looking for a place among their countrymen where they could find land, build a home and settle permanently.

Pastor Dahlsten continued to search for a solution to the problems of the poor jobless immigrants that he ministered to daily. He worked to house, feed, and care for the hundreds of people who were arriving monthly from Sweden. For some time, the Swedes of Galesburg had discussed the possibility of leaving to settle elsewhere, but had not acted on this thought. Eric Norelius<sup>23</sup> wrote: "In the summer (of 1868), the people of Galesburg started to think of moving out."<sup>24</sup>

Dahlsten, writing in the third person, explained the situation himself:

"Pastor Dahlsten, who was pastor in Galesburg, as well as many of the older Swedes in the locality, had long realized the necessity of moving out. Many said that they wished to go out in the west to take land, but would not go there if they should be left without church or pastor. Pastor Dahlsten granted that if many of them should go to the same place, that they could have both (land and church)".<sup>25</sup>

The Swedes of Galesburg knew about the Homestead Act of 1862, which entitled the prospective settler to 80 or 160 acres of land free of charge, if they could live on the land for five years and make some improvements. They also were aware that the railroads in the west had received land grants of every alternate section of land for twenty miles on each side of their right-of-ways. The land the railroad was not going to use was offered for sale at reasonable prices. During the years 1867-1868, there were endless dialogues about these lands to the west. They debated which locality would offer the best lands for future permanent homes. Iowa, Kansas and Nebraska were among many possible locations discussed as suitable sites to build a community.<sup>26</sup>

In April of 1868, Pastor Dahlsten received a letter from an old friend in Sweden. The letter was from Olof Olsson,<sup>27</sup> Dahlsten's former classmate and now Pastor of the Lutheran Church in Sunnemo Parish. Through this letter,



Olsson requested information from Dahlsten about America and possibilities for spreading missionary work there. He wrote that the First Swedish Agricultural Company of Jefferson County, based in Chicago, had invited Olsson to come to America to provide spiritual leadership for this colony that was to be established in the Smoky Valley of Kansas.

Olof Olsson had been considering emigration for a year. In April of 1867, T. N. Hasselquist, President of the Augustana Synod, sent a call to Olsson to come and join the Lutheran ministry in America.

Olsson's letter to Dahlsten presented a long list of questions about America and the opportunities he would find for himself and for members of his congregation. He also expressed concern about the restrictions and difficulties that he would encounter with the church in America.

Pastor Dahlsten responded with a long letter, dated May 4, 1868. The letter described how the Augustana Synod operated, the freedoms and restrictions of the Synod, and the difficulties that he had encountered in his ministry in Galesburg. Dahlsten related to Olsson the difficulties of his work, the problems with the factions that were building within his own congregation, and the growing rift over the mission movement.<sup>28</sup>

Dahlsten wrote: "If you come here, you have the right, yes, you are bound to exercise discipline on the basis of the word of God." This statement was in reference to the

had tolerance that existed among pastors and congregations. Religion was based on the word of God, and not strictly on Lutheran Doctrine as practiced in Sweden. Perhaps Dahlsten was writing to himself on this point. It is ironic that the advice that he was giving to Olsson was so opposite of his own actions as they related to the dissenters within his own congregation.

He also told Olsson, quoting Romans: "If possible so far as depends on you, live peaceably with all." This statement to Olsson was prophetic about the future troubles which Olof Olsson would encounter with the Doctrine of Atonement and his work in the Smoky Valley.

The final portion of the letter described the great promise of the American social and economic life. "You cannot really believe how rich the land is here as well as many other blessings....You can be certain that this is a poor man's country and he who wants to do so can work. Those who are rich may very well stay in Sweden. The equality that prevails here is a great advantage. A poor man's ability is recognized here just as much as that of a rich man."<sup>29</sup>

The letter that Dahlsten wrote to Olof Olsson on that May day was a pivotal moment in both of their lives. Olsson made his decision to come to America and accept the position with the First Swedish Company in Chicago. He would accept the call to lead a colony and found a new congregation far from the security of his parish in Sunnemo. Dahlsten, as a result of the renewed relationship with his old friend from

men, started to reexamine the course his life was taking. He moved closer to finding his true life's work, not in the busy urban centers of Illinois, nor in the halls of power within the Augustana Synod, but in a humble sod church, among poor immigrant farmers on the lonely prairie of Kansas.

The summer of 1868 was very eventful in the parish of First Lutheran in Galesburg. Many of Dahlsten's parishioners were seriously considering a move to the lands in the west. Others were questioning the doctrines and theological authority of the Augustana Synod.

In August, five deacons and several other members of First Lutheran met at the home of Olaf Johnson, the Sunday school superintendent. Johnson said that he could no longer remain in the church and would leave the congregation. The members agreed with his views and resolved to form a mission society and to worship in the manner they chose. They formed the new Second Evangelical Lutheran Church of Galesburg and forty members of First Lutheran resigned and joined this new congregation. Later, it became one of the foundation parishes of the Mission Covenant Church in America.<sup>30</sup>

This tumultuous event must have caused Pastor Dahlsten to reconsider his tenure at First Lutheran. To lose such a large portion of the parish certainly tarnished the reputation of one of the finest and most prominent young pastors in the Augustana Synod. Not only were his chances for high office in the synod now diminished, he came to the

ization that his future in the pulpit of First Lutheran was uncertain, and perhaps he also should consider the mission field in the unsettled regions to the west.

A few days after the split in the congregation occurred, a formal meeting was called to seriously discuss a move from Galesburg to somewhere in the unsettled western lands. At the urging of Pastor Dahlsten, the first meeting was held in early August of 1868 at the First Lutheran Church Congregation School in Galesburg. Between two and three hundred hopeful men attended this meeting. After much discussion about the seriousness of the intentions of the prospective pioneers, it was decided to hold a second meeting and make formal agreements about what to do.

Years later in a letter to Eric Norelius, Pastor Dahlsten wrote about this first meeting: "Information had arrived from Andover and Swedonia, Illinois, that many fellow countrymen there would join with the colony. Therefore, notice was given for another meeting the following week."<sup>31</sup>

News of this meeting spread fast among the Swedes of western Illinois, and the second meeting was attended by between three and four hundred people. Most of those who attended were originally from Sweden's Småland Province, while many others were primarily from the provinces of Dalarna and Kalmar. After much more discussion, a plan was adopted to form the Galesburg Colonization Company. John P. Stromquist was elected secretary and Olof Thorstenberg was

President. The meeting then focused on what they should really do. It was decided to appoint a committee that would look for land in Missouri, Kansas or Nebraska.<sup>32</sup>

Olof Thorstenberg, as President of the Galesburg Colonization Company, was elected to lead the expedition to search for land. He was a long time Swedish citizen of Galesburg, a leader in community affairs, and a member of the church council at First Lutheran. He was to be accompanied by Gustaf Johnson, another member of the church council.<sup>33</sup> John Rodell and William Johnson, both members of the church council of the Andover Lutheran Church, were also elected to the committee. Pastor Dahlsten also promised to go if the congregation gave its approval of his absence.<sup>34</sup>

There have surfaced two written versions documenting the events of the Galesburg Company meetings. The first was written by F. G. Hawkinson in 1919. He was just a boy who attended the meetings with his father and then wrote his account some fifty years later. The second was written by Dahlsten in 1891 at the request of Lutheran historian, Eric Norelius. Dahlsten was a central figure in the proceedings. On most points the two writers agree, but on one point the two present different versions of the events.

In Hawkinson's memoir, he states that there were totally independent meetings to form a colony in Swedonia. He indicated that Rodell and W. Johnson met the Galesburg committee on the train, and from there they merged their interests. Dahlsten's version suggests that the colony

ning and meetings in the two communities were coordinated from the beginning. In any case, the efforts of the two communities merged and they worked together for the benefit of all.

As the meeting progressed a plan of action was formulated. Dahlsten continues:

"The committee was given the following commission:

1. to select land in Missouri, Kansas, Iowa, or Nebraska for a large settlement with a good supply of government land for homestead and preemption.
2. to arrange about purchase conditions on the land which has been bought, but not make the purchase.
3. upon returning home at the next meeting, give a full description of the land, and also listings on the land which has been chosen.

The Company decided that the committee's costs shall be paid, but not the time. The opinion was that it should become a Lutheran settlement.

Before the meeting ended, Pastor Dahlsten was asked if he would become the Colony Pastor in case the enterprise was successful. The answer was: 'In case that he (Dahlsten) found God willing, so would he be willing.' "35

Preparations were made by the search committee to leave as soon as possible. They decided to first explore Missouri for a possible destination. Each week *Det Rätta Hemlandet* carried an article on the successes of the Missouri Land Company. The reports were so glowing that they thought that Missouri should be considered first.<sup>36</sup>

The Galesburg Company committee also made plans to search the river valleys in Kansas if their search proved

less in Missouri. The weekly issues of *Det Rätta Landet* carried an advertisement for the National Land Company of St. Louis. The company's purpose was to sell the grants of the Kansas Pacific Railroad. They were promoting land in the Republican, Saline, Solomon and Smoky river valleys in Kansas.<sup>37</sup>

One site in Kansas that the committee was anxious to buy was the Smoky (Hill) Valley. They knew that this valley was already the home of several Swedish homesteaders. The earliest known Swede in the valley was Anders Carlgren. He had settled, in 1864, nine miles south of Salina, in Section 30, Township 15 South, Range 2 West, Saline County, Kansas. His few visitors found him on his claim, living crudely in the hollow of a large cottonwood tree near the Smoky Hill River.

Gustaf Johnson led a small group into the Smoky Valley in 1867. Included in this company were men named Hultquist, Spongeberg, "Papa" Linn, Nordlund, Ahlquist and Karl Johnson. Andrew Johnson, a nephew of Carlgren, joined the old man with his family in the autumn of 1867. Several other Swedes also came to the valley between 1865-1867.

In the Spring of 1868, a circuit rider, Pastor G. H. Larson held the first Lutheran worship service in the Smoky Valley. The few Swedes in the area gathered at the Nordlund dugout. Pastor Larson found that these first settlers had little interest in religion or establishing a congregation. Their concerns were focused on just surviving on the open

of Kansas. Larson soon departed in search of more  
 le ground to sow his spiritual seeds.<sup>38</sup>

Dahlsten also knew, through his connection with Olof  
 on, that a colony was forming in Chicago and had  
 ased lands in northern McPherson County, Kansas, within  
 last few days. This Chicago based group eventually  
 me the First Swedish Agricultural Company of McPherson  
 ty. They arrived in the Smoky Valley in the spring and  
 mer of 1869 and founded the Bethany Lutheran Church and  
 city of Lindsborg, Kansas.<sup>39</sup> Since the Swedes were of a  
 ad to settle near their countrymen, the search committee  
 dided to explore the Smoky Valley for the Galesburg group  
 nwell.

Pastor Dahlsten also went to Kansas in an official  
 apacity for the church. He was sent there to investigate  
 he possible need for the establishment of a Lutheran  
 mission field in Kansas. The young pastor wrote:

"The committee traveled off not only in the  
 name of the settlement but in God's name, for this  
 belief in God and desire for the undertaking  
 should direct them. They traveled through Missouri  
 but did not find what they wished. In Lawrence,  
 Kansas, the Kansas Pacific had their land  
 commissioner who, since all inquiries were made  
 here, took the committee to Salina, Kansas, since  
 one then could get both government land and  
 railroad land."<sup>40</sup>

The Galesburg search committee arrived in Salina in  
 late August of 1868. The next morning, just as the first



of the sun were glimmering in the eastern sky, the men  
to south from Salina. Before them lay the land, misty in  
morning light, with a constant haze that gave the valley  
name. The grass stood as high as a man's shoulder and  
med with the creatures of the prairie, a sign of good  
land. The Swedes passed numerous creeks and streams, marked  
ly by cottonwoods, the only trees to be seen. From their  
vantage point they could follow the path of a great river,  
the Smoky Hill River, as it snaked its way across the length  
of the valley, heading in its unending flow toward the  
ocean.

Every so often the men would bend down and scratch  
into the earth to touch the rich, black soil. They were  
amazed as they pressed the earth in their hands and smelled  
the thick rich aroma. These men of Sweden, used to the thin  
rocky soil of their homeland, could not believe that the  
earth could be as rich and fertile as in this valley.

As they gazed through the mist, the men could see in  
the distance the blue-green bluffs rising above the valley  
floor. Once the lookout of the Spanish explorer Coronado,  
searching for a treasure that he never found, the bluffs  
stood above the true treasure, the land itself. Little could  
they know that eventually a cross of stones would lie on the  
crest of the northernmost hill to commemorate the day they  
entered the valley and found themselves a home. Home not  
only for a few, but for many whose children still reap the

riches that these five men discovered in the Smoky Valley of Kansas.

Elated with their find, the men returned to Salina, where they met with John Johnson, who was selling the land in all the nearby river valleys for the National Land Company. This company, a subsidiary of the Kansas Pacific Railroad, was organized to handle the land grant sales to pay for building the railroad.<sup>41</sup>

On September 1, 1868, the Kansas Pacific Railroad transferred to the National Land Company the land desired by the Galesburg Company where it was put into an escrow. The Galesburg committee selected 22 sections of land, amounting to 14,800 acres, in Smolan and Smoky View Townships in Saline County and in the Union and Sharps Creek Townships of McPherson County.<sup>42</sup> This land bordered that of the Chicago Company on the north and the west. The district purchased in this way stretched from five miles south of Salina to three miles west of Marquette.<sup>43</sup>

The Saline County land lies for the most part, along the Dry Creek watershed. The land, fertile and predominantly alluvial, is nearly flat to gently rolling in some areas. To the south and west the land rises 400 feet above the valley floor to form the Smoky Hill Bluffs. The soil in the upland is thin, dry and well suited to livestock grazing.

The Galesburg Company land located in Union Township in McPherson County continues to the south of the bluffs.

rich land straddles both sides of the Smoky Hill River  
lies above the lowest floodplain.<sup>44</sup>

Once the business of procuring land for the Galesburg  
company was concluded, the five men called upon the Swedes  
already in the valley. A worship service was held to give  
thanks on the first Sunday in September, 1868. Pastor  
Alsten well remembered the service he performed that day  
in the Smoky Valley:

"My first visit was in the autumn of 1868.  
Then I preached where Lindsborg is now situated,  
down by the river, under a large cottonwood tree,  
in which top a turkey cock was performing his  
music during the whole divine service. When the  
last hymn was sung, he flew away."<sup>45</sup>

Much excitement and enthusiasm greeted the travelers  
when they returned to Galesburg. As soon as possible, a  
meeting was held to organize and promote settlement.  
Hundreds of people packed into the *Församlingens Skolhus* to  
hear of the journey and the descriptions of the land in the  
valley. The lands that were sequestered by the National Land  
Company were priced in a range from \$1.50 to \$5.00 per acre.  
Much discussion followed as the company debated a fair  
system to divide the land among the prospective  
homesteaders. Finally, the company decided that the only  
equitable way to distribute the land was by lottery. A  
section was designated as a unit in the drawing by lot.  
"Relatives and friends who wished to live on adjoining farms

and together in groups of four to eight, depending on desire for 80 or 160 acre farms. The section was then divided out by agreement or by lot among the individuals."<sup>46</sup> A delegate for each section then lined up and drew from a jar the legal coordinates for their new home in the Smoky Valley.

The hopeful participants took a chance of drawing the 50 upland, or the \$5.00 bottom land. Their futures depended on a lucky draw. However the lottery turned out, the use was very unusual. They must have had great faith in their pastor and the search committee to have chosen land that so few had seen.

A week later, a final meeting of the Galesburg Colonization Company was held. The National Land Company agent, John Johnson, provided contracts to those who had participated in the lottery. The terms of the contracts were: "one fifth down in cash, the balance in four equal payments at 10 percent interest. Only the interest was paid the first year."<sup>47</sup>

Pastor Dahlsten wrote:

"The land selected by the committee was not enough, and therefore O.H. Thorstenburg once more traveled to Kansas to choose more land. About 38,000 acres<sup>48</sup> of railroad land was taken by the colony that same autumn. That land on the whole cost \$3.05 per acre. They that first moved on the land also had first and best opportunity to take homestead or preemptions. Hereby one can understand why the Swedes began to move quickly to settle."<sup>49</sup>

Each participant in the lottery then paid his share and the traveling expenses and minor costs of the committee. At this point the Galesburg Colonization Company completed its purpose and was disbanded. It had never been a formalized company and was only a tool for organizing and acquiring land for a group of Swedes in Illinois. It remained for the individuals who had purchased land to get themselves and their families to the Smoky Valley of Kansas. Most of the individuals involved continued to meet, help one another, and work together for their common interests.

Pastor Dahlsten's role was vital to the success of the Galesburg Company. It had been his desire to meet the growing needs of his congregation and the displaced immigrants who came to his parish looking for a better life in a new land. He also became caught up in the pioneering spirit. When he saw that unsettled valley and its possibilities, there must have rekindled in him the missionary flame that had been first ignited so many years before by Dr. Fjellstedt in Sweden. He also knew that his days at First Lutheran were probably numbered with the loss of so many parishioners to Second Lutheran, many more parishioners leaving for Kansas, and the rejection of his building project for a new church.

Like so many of the people that surrounded him, Dahlsten's future lay to the west, on the empty prairie of Kansas.

## Chapter 4

### Kansas Fever

Kansas Fever! Those words were in the mouths, the minds, and ever increasingly in the hearts of the Swedes of Illinois that fall and winter of 1868. The newspapers carried stories each week with news of the formation of land companies and the departure of settlers to the west. *Det Nya Hemlandet* carried articles each week extolling the successes of the Missouri Land Company. News and information about the Chicago based Swedish Agricultural Company of McPherson County, Kansas appeared in five articles between July and October.<sup>1</sup>

Advertisements offering land for sale in the river valleys of Kansas were prominent in the newspapers. Rich lands in the Saline, Republican, Solomon, and Smoky Hill River Valleys were offered by the National Land Company.<sup>2</sup> Here was the opportunity the Swedes crossed the North Atlantic to find.

Not only did the Swedes want good rich farmland, but they wanted it in large tracts so whole communities could settle together. They wanted a place to live, surrounded by their countrymen, to speak their native tongue, and especially to worship as they chose with their own church

pastor. The empty lands of Kansas offered all of these opportunities. "Kansas Fever" was the result.

The Swedes of western Illinois listened to the reports and reacted quickly. They now owned thousands of acres in Kansas. It remained for the Swedish pioneers to get themselves to that land, and then to start a new life.

The very first of the Galesburg people reached Saline County in October of 1868. Johannes Holmkvist, Gust Holmkvist, and John Danielson traveled to Kansas from Dekalb, Illinois. They had chosen not to purchase any of the railroad land through the Galesburg Company. Instead they pushed out ahead to have the first chance to select a Homestead section. The three men searched the area and finally decided to file a claim on Section 20, Township 15 South, Range 3 West. This section lies near the center of the Galesburg Company land and straddles both sides of Dry Creek.

Johannes Holmkvist and John Danielson were both married and had several children. In order to have the first pick of the Homestead land, they left their families in Dekalb and decided not to bring them to Kansas until they had a home established. The Homestead Act required that the settler live on their claim to qualify for title. So the three men built a crude shelter to live in during the winter. A much disputed oral tradition within the Holmkvist family maintains that this shack was built across the boundary line of the two brothers' claims. It is possible

this shelter was built so it crossed over onto the  
Hessler claim as well.<sup>3</sup>

On October 20, 1868, Johannes Holmkvist and John  
Hessler met the train at the depot in Salina and greeted  
men they knew from Illinois, Mons Peterson and Bengt  
Hessler. The new arrivals were first cousins whose original  
name was Pehrson.<sup>4</sup> The two men missed the Galesburg Company  
meetings. When they learned of the group's plans, they  
traveled to Salina to purchase lands as close as possible to  
the Galesburg group. The four men hired a rig and drove  
south from Salina. The newcomers were impressed with the  
land and purchased a quarter section on Section 1, Township  
14S, South Range 3 West. This land was purchased for \$3.50 an  
acre from John Johnson of the National Land Company. They  
also took advantage of the Homestead Act and filed on  
several 80 acre tracts for relatives who were coming to  
Kansas later. The Hessler claim was located on the north  
edge of the present town of Assaria, Kansas.<sup>5</sup>

The first concern of Hessler and Peterson after  
purchasing their land was to build a shelter. After a cool  
October night under the stars, the two men headed back to  
Salina to buy lumber. The only locally cut lumber would have  
been cottonwood planks. These cottonwood boards easily  
warped, were impossible to fit together properly, and  
deteriorated rapidly. They bought five hundred board feet  
for \$25.00. By noon the Swedes were back at their building  
site with their supplies. That afternoon they built what



best be described as a shed, fourteen feet long by eight feet wide. The roof was constructed by weaving the strands of prairie grass through saplings and covering with earth.

During the winter of 1868-1869, the two men made a little money cutting logs and wood on the Smoky Hill River about a mile east of their homestead. On one trip through the timber, about a mile north of their shed, they ran across a dugout, where Anders Carlgren was living. They were quite impressed with the quality of his home, a dugout. They had never seen a building like it before, and immediately saw the advantages it had over their drafty cottonwood shed. Hessler and Peterson rushed home, quickly tore down their pathetic abode and built a sod house in its place.

A few days later, Hessler was walking to Salina. Along the way he found an old spade. Delighted at his good fortune, he had a blacksmith named Swenson remake it into a hoe. With this crude tool the first sod was turned on the Hessler farm.<sup>6</sup>

During the month of December, 1868, several more members of the Galesburg Company arrived in Kansas. They were: John P. Stromquist, Carl Frank from Småland, and Anders Erickson, with his wife, Anna, and his twelve year old son Erik, from Dalarna, Sweden. John P. Stromquist described the little party's first days in the valley. His story is one of the few surviving accounts of the early settlement days.

"On the way to Salina, we encountered a heavy snowstorm which lasted several days. It continued to be very cold. The snow was deep. We were unable to get anyone to supply us with a horse and buggy, so we decided to walk, making it easier to look over the country. We started out in the morning in spite of the cold. There was no road to follow but we used the hills as our guides.

We heard in Salina that on the south side of the bluff a house had been built, or was under construction by the Chicago Company. We hoped to reach it the first day. The hills appeared to be quite near as we left Salina. We walked in the tall grass and in the snow, which in many places came up to our knees. We kept up our courage with small talk and by telling stories, and although hungry and tired we kept on walking. Dinnertime came and the hills appeared just as far away.

When we finally arrived at the north end of the bluff, the sun was setting and it still seemed very far to the south end. This tested the stubbornness of the men from Småland, and the endurance of the man from Dalarna. We plodded quietly forward and it wasn't long before we saw the longed for "Company House". We arrived a short time after dusk and were given supper and lodging. The house was almost completed, so they had been able to move in the day before. They lay on the floor which was bare ground and very damp. We slept quite well because we were so very tired.

The next morning after breakfast, we went down toward the river where we heard that there were some settlers. Toward the end of the afternoon we saw some smoke columns rising in the distance. There must be people there, we said. When we came closer we saw a woman feeding cattle. She became a little embarrassed when she saw us, but did not seem to be afraid. We introduced ourselves, were kindly received, given a good supper, good lodging, and a good breakfast the next morning - all for which she firmly refused payment. Her husband was away working.

I learned from her that my good friend and comrade-in-arms, G.F. Lundstrom had settled by Indian Creek a year or so before. We had not seen each other since we had been in Sweden. We decided to visit him. He appeared as glad to see us as we were to see him.

After resting there one day, he returned with us to Salina. Mr. Lundstrom had a horse and wagon so he picked up our few possessions, also Mrs. Erickson and her son, and we returned to our homestead. Mr. A. G. "Papa" Linn had promised us that we could live with him while building my house. He had a homestead by the Smoky Hill River. Mr. Linn was a young man, about thirty years old, large, strong, good hearted, helpful and unselfish. His dugout was a little over a mile from my place. We had a home until my house was ready. Our comrade, Carl Frank, remained in Salina, later settling near where Smolan is now located.

Erickson and I agreed to work together in building our houses. He helped me with my house first. We hewed timber in the woods by the river. Linn helped with the hauling. Our log cabin, 14 X 20 feet was soon finished. It was the first log cabin in the Freemount Congregation's territory. The others were dugouts. It was also the first cabin to have a floor made out of wood. It was a floor of heavy unplanned boards of poor quality, but it cost only \$60.00 per thousand feet. The roof was of sod and grass.

We moved in when my house was ready and began building Erickson's house. We had to walk over four miles every morning and evening and worked fully twelve hours a day. Today such hours are considered too strenuous, but we did not think it unusual then."<sup>7</sup>

Anders Erickson and his family were the first Swedes to settle in Marquette Township. His dugout was in Section 24, Township 17 South, Range 3 West, McPherson County, Kansas, and was located just east of the present town of Marquette.

The fall and winter of 1868-1869 flew by quickly for Pastor Dahlsten. He did everything possible to prepare the Swedes of Galesburg for their move to Kansas. Most of the people who purchased land through the Galesburg Company were

ing to leave for Kansas in late February. Dahlsten organized the group so that they could travel together. He chartered three cars on a Kansas bound train for the pioneers. The cost of each ticket was \$12.50, a considerable sum for families with many children, but worth it to be able to start their adventure with so many of their friends and neighbors.<sup>8</sup>

The day of departure finally came for the Swedish pioneers of Galesburg. The railroad station was crowded with well-wishers and friends. The pioneers were saying their farewells, surrounded by their children and all of their earthly belongings. As the time for departure approached, Pastor Dahlsten went through the cars wishing each one well, offering prayers, and giving support and encouragement for the unknown days ahead. With a blast of the whistle, the train departed from Galesburg on the morning of February 23, 1869. The great adventure began.

Young John Englund, a boy of eleven that day in 1869, remembered the trip to Kansas. He wrote:

"Yes, I remember the trip well....We were on the train for two days. I remember especially well Lawrence, Wamego, and Abilene, because many people left the train at those places. We were all eagerly watching for our station and hoping it would soon be reached after our train came to Kansas."<sup>9</sup>

The Swedish pioneers were fortunate to have in their number several outstanding leaders. John Rodell, a member of

Galesburg Company search committee, served as lay deacon of the Andover Lutheran Church and a member of the church council. He was the undisputed leader of those pioneers from Andover who settled in the Freemount community. His leadership and spiritual guidance became the backbone of their settlement. Anders Erickson and John Stromquist also provided leadership to those who settled along the Smoky Hill River.

Carl Johan Brodine (Broden) was perhaps the greatest of the leaders of the Galesburg Colony. Brodine was born in Vigstadt, Småland, Sweden, on November 1, 1821.<sup>10</sup> He emigrated from Sweden in 1853 with his family. C.J. Brodine was apparently a prosperous farmer in Sweden, and among the landed farmers who were the earliest Swedish pioneers in America. Brodine booked passage, not only for himself, but also his wife, two young sons and four oxen.

During the course of the voyage to America, Brodine's wife died, probably from cholera. Upon arriving in New York City, the surviving Brodine family members passed through the Castle Garden Immigrant Center. The Brodine descendants offer two version of the following events. In one version, C. J. Brodine left his youngest son with a baby sitter, while he and his older son, Peter John Brodine, went to arrange for transportation of their baggage and livestock from New York to Andover, Illinois. When he returned to retrieve his son, the boy and the baby sitter had vanished. The second version of the account states that when the

ly arrived at Castle Garden, the boy was severely ill with cholera and would not be allowed into the United States. With the likelihood of the boy's survival dismal at that time, he was left there and the family traveled on without him. Whichever variation is true, nothing was ever heard of the youngest Brodine child again.

Two years later, C. J. Brodine married Anna Josephina Hanson. Josephina was a widow whose husband had died on the voyage from Sweden to America. She brought to the marriage three sons; John Peter, Nils Magnus, and Swan August. Brodine took them in, gave them his name, and raised them as his own. C. J. and Josephina also raised four children of their own; Charles, Christina, Josephine, and Axel.<sup>12</sup>

Brodine's oldest son, by his first wife, Peter John Brodine, graduated from the Augustana Seminary and entered the Lutheran ministry. He never came to Kansas but served faithfully in parishes in Illinois and Nebraska.<sup>13</sup>

Brodine was a devout man and a staunch churchman as well. He was considered a lay deacon preacher and often led worship services and worked wherever needed in the church. When the opportunity came to migrate to Kansas, he assumed the role of leader in the Galesburg Company, and, until Dahlsten arrived later, the spiritual guide to the Swedish pioneers of the northern Smoky Valley.

Carl Stromquist remembered C. J. Brodine when he wrote:

"He was a man with deep spiritual experiences, great insight into the scriptures, and an unusual gift of speaking and preaching.... He lived according to what he preached to others. His sermons were always genuine, and included warnings, admonitions, and comforting words. He was in truth a preacher of the Gospel. He was altogether different from those who were gifted with a good voice and a fluent tongue, and those who felt superior to their pastor....Brodine was a great help, and a sincere friend of the pastor."<sup>14</sup>

Dr. Carl A. Swensson, President of Bethany College in Midsborg, wrote an obituary for C. J. Brodine in *Det Rätta Hemlandet*, dated July 25, 1895:

"...I humbly place a simple wreath on the bier of possibly the most exemplary lay preacher in our Augustana Synod...How many have said since last Wednesday, when the news of his death became known, that there was only one such lay Preacher and possibly only one Deacon of his caliber in the entire Synod. Mr. Brodine was a farmer and a carpenter and worked very hard. In this respect he was only one among thousands that had similar work to do. However, it was his work as a Christian and advisor in Christian Evangelism and as an advocate of peaceful settlement in all matters that made his life a blessing to this area....I can see without effort his erect, stalwart, Nordic figure with his open book. He spoke with freshness and a colorful voice, bearing an expression. His hearers immediately sensed the powers of his natural gifts and his sincere and honest convictions...One reason for his great influence was his humility. For forty years he served as Deacon, but,

nevertheless, he did not consider himself a Pope. He advanced in age, wisdom, and grace, learning to know his own limitations which keep alive the humility of the spirit. He did not consider himself a wise man, but others recognized him as such. He did not seek prominent positions but received them nevertheless. He was not one of those wise know-it-all's that criticized everything, especially the Pastors. He was his Pastor's true friend, his trusty helper in all matters...He was a man of hope that knew the best was yet to come."<sup>15</sup>

Pastor A. W. Dahlsten bid farewell to his parishioners that February day with the calm assurance that they were under the able leadership of his friend, C. J. Brodine. His leadership and guidance were pivotal to the initial achievement of the founding of the Galesburg Colony in Kansas and the ultimate success of the Swedish pioneers.

Brodine was also assisted by several of the other Swedes who settled in the northern portion of the Galesburg Colony. Olof Thorstenberg, President of the Galesburg Company and a member of the search committee, continued to work for the success of all of the families around him. Johan Ekholm and Bengt Hessler also provided noteworthy leadership in those first weeks in the Smoky Valley.

The train arrived in Salina, Kansas on February 25, 1869. The Swedes disembarked to find a rugged little town very different from the established cities of Illinois. Salina was a collection of shacks, saloons, and the railroad



ds. The most noteworthy place was the hotel run by old  
her Bikerdyke, the iron willed former Civil War Nurse and  
friend of President Grant. The Swedes were met at the  
station by John Johnson, the National Land Company agent,  
and given directions to find their land.

The Swedish pioneers were very excited as they arrived  
at Salina that February day. Among those who came were many  
families whose descendants still live in the Smoky Valley  
today. The travelers who disembarked from the train that  
February day included Nyberg, Bondison, Burnison, Freeburg,  
Cedarholm, Peterson, Hart, Swanson, Hawkinson, Rodell,  
Hokanson, Lindquist, Lundquist, Feldt, Johnson and others.  
These families, mostly associated with the Andover and  
Swedonia areas in Illinois, had taken land in the future  
Freemount community.

Family names such as Brodine, Mattson, Lindholm,  
England, Frost, Thelander, Falk, Berquist, Thorstenberg,  
Bengtson, Anderson and many more settled in the Salemsborg  
region. These people were generally more closely associated  
with Galesburg's Swedish community.<sup>16</sup>

The Galesburg Company Swedes wasted little time in  
Salina and quickly sought to locate the farmland that they  
had contracted to purchase, site unseen, in Illinois, months  
earlier. The newcomers were as delighted with the Smoky  
Valley as the search committee had been. In the distance,  
the Smoky Bluffs could be seen through the hazy morning, and  
some even climbed to the crest to gain an unobstructed view

this strange but beautiful valley that was to be their home.

Few people owned a wagon or livestock, so they walked, carrying everything they owned, from Salina to their homesteads. Hans Hanson remembered how the Swedes walked long distances across the prairie when he wrote:

"The women as well as men walked. Lisa Hanson, along with her husband, Hans, and four month old baby, walked to the (Anders) Erickson homestead in the spring of 1869. Olaf Olson, in 1869, made a bet with a Mrs. Ahlquist, that they could walk to Freemount. They left Salina at nine o'clock and arrived at twelve noon at Mrs. Ahlquist's relation at Freemount."<sup>17</sup>

As each family located their new home place, the settlers inspected it carefully for the perfect site to build a house. The need for a good source of water was of primary importance in the daily lives of these new pioneers. They each looked for a homesite in close proximity to a creek so that a ready supply of water would be nearby. It should be on higher ground in case of floods, with a little slope for good drainage. The winds of the prairie on the higher hills were unrelenting and sometimes debilitating. The constancy of the winds on these vast Kansas prairies could be unnerving to settlers, especially the women, who were not used to them. The more seasoned pioneers knew that even though the sight from the top of the hills could be

autiful on a calm morning, the winds could later be even difficult for the hardiest person to withstand. These settlers were used to the sight of immense forests of mature trees in their homelands, but here few homesteads could boast of even a single tree. They would be lucky to see a few cottonwood trees near the creeks. Later they would be able to transplant these fast growing trees near their homes, but for now they would be living on areas of the prairie where a tree was an uncommon, but most welcome sight.

Once the best building site was found, the settler began to construct a house. Some houses were made from cottonwood planks, a few others from sandstone, but the majority were dugouts and sod houses. The pioneers used whatever materials that were available to them on the prairie, there was usually little choice but sod. John Englund remembered the construction of his family's sod house during their first days in the valley:

"Within two weeks the new house was ready and the family was by themselves. The father and two sons, with the help of Mr. Hart, had located a farm, dug a well which was to be faced with stone and fitted with a curb, and erected a dwelling place. The sod fields, the grass in sloughs, in trees in Dry Creek, and the Salina lumber yard - all had combined materials for the unique one-room structure. It was a type of its own; not a sod house, not a dugout, a cross between the two. Half of the structure was below ground; the other half

above. Plows and spades were used to strip the sod three inches deep where the root fibers were not too tough, and the exposed ground surfaced fairly smooth. Sod slabs were trimmed into rectangular shapes fourteen inches long, twelve inches wide, and three inches thick. These were laid like masonry, one upon another, beginning at the floor of the excavation, and extending five or six feet above the normal ground level. The walls would be either twelve or fourteen inches thick, depending upon how the blocks were placed.

The roof was supported by beams, rafters and posts obtained from the trees along Dry Creek.....Long coarse grass, called slough grass from the place it grew best....was used to thatch the roof. Half windows and lumber for the door frames were purchased from the Salina Lumber Yard. Finally, to complete the exterior, dirt was banked against the wall above ground to prevent water getting in and washing down the sides underground, which might cause the walls to cave in."<sup>18</sup>

Most of the Swedish pioneers arrived in Kansas with their families. However, a few had left their families in Illinois and came to Kansas alone. They hoped to establish a home on the prairie and then to bring their families out some time later. Such were the Holmkvist brothers and John Danielson. After living together the first winter, they built separate homes.

Gust Holmkvist, a bachelor, built his first house of cottonwood planks. It was 11 feet by 11 feet, and six feet high. There were no windows and only a crude door. He did most of the work himself, and paid three cents a foot for

cottonwood."<sup>19</sup> Johannes Holmkvist and John Danielson built larger houses to accommodate their families.

Early in the spring of 1869, an itinerant worker came to the new community. He walked to each of the homesteads in the area and offered to dig a well for the new settler. This man was known to the Swedes as Johnny "Brunn" translating into English as Johnny Well.

Gust Holmkvist hired Johnny Brunn to dig a well on his homestead. The two men took a wagon out to the Smoky Bluffs a few miles to the southwest of the farm. They dug up, collected and hauled several loads of ironstone, a hard form of sandstone, to line the hole. As the digging progressed, the circular wall was lined with the stones. They used no mortar but cut and set the stones very tightly and securely. As the depth of the well got deeper, Johnny would lower a chicken down into the hole before descending himself. This was done to check the well for poisonous gas. If the chicken was still alive when it was pulled up, the well was free of gas, and safe to enter. If the chicken was dead, the gas in the well would have quickly killed any man who climbed down there. The well was dug to a depth of thirty feet when Johnny found plenty of good, clean, cold water. Johnny Brunn's craftsmanship was so outstanding that the well never needed repairing and still exists one hundred and twenty-five years later, just as the well digger left it. When the wells were completed, Johnny Brunn left the valley and never

turned. He moved on to other places where wells needed to be dug.<sup>20</sup>

Once houses were built and wells were dug, the priority of the new Swedish settler was to plant a crop. Food would be needed for winter and the pioneer farmer needed a cash crop of wheat, oats or corn to sell. The farmers desperately needed money to buy the supplies they could not grow or make themselves, and for the first year's interest on their newly acquired land, which was due in September. The soil was rich and black, and in some places native grass was as tall as a man on horseback. Lovisa Anderson, a girl of seventeen that summer of 1869, recalled that when they walked to a neighbor's house, they tied bits of cloth to the tops of the tallest stems along the way, so as not to get lost in the endless waving sea of grass.

Gust Holmkvist purchased a yoke of oxen and a walking plow to begin his farming. When he broke the first few furrows into the sod, he turned back to inspect his progress, only to find that dozens of snakes had crawled out of the tall grass to bask in the sun on the freshly plowed ground.<sup>21</sup>

John Englund remembered that his father planted corn, spring wheat, broom corn, and potatoes.<sup>22</sup> The spring wheat was ravaged by chinch bugs and was soon abandoned as a crop. Others tried sugar and sorghum cane and did very well with these crops. The women raised gardens and planted vegetables

ch as turnips, peas, corn, potatoes, squash, beans, and sweet potatoes.<sup>23</sup>

More settlers arrived from Illinois in the summer. Anders Sjogren and his family, the Hedbergs, more of Anders Erickson's family, Olaf Olson, and Gust Carlson came in August. Olaf Hanson, H. Anderson, John Hopp and family, P.F. Lindh, and several others came in September and October.<sup>24</sup> Very quickly the land was being taken and the Smoky Valley, being almost entirely unpopulated in 1868, was by the fall of 1869, filling up with Swedish immigrants.

There are many stories and oral traditions surrounding those first days in the Smoky Valley. The land was so different from the populated cities of Illinois, or the Swedish countryside, that each day brought a new adventure. Memories of these first days remained very vivid to the pioneers, and as they grew old and gray, they reveled in the opportunities to recount to their children and grandchildren that time in their life when each day brought something new and different. Very few of these pioneers wrote their experiences down; many could not write or even read, so many of these tales of adventure have been handed down in the rich oral tradition that is an integral part of the Smoky Valley of Kansas.

Wildlife abounded in the tall, lush prairie grass. Buffalo were declining in number in the Smoky Valley, but were not uncommonly seen, especially on the western fringes of the Galesburg lands. The evidence of their vast numbers

the valley were everywhere. Buffalo chips, or dried manure, were often used for fuel in the cook stoves. Great buffalo wallows were scattered around the valley as well. In spots where the ground was soft, the buffalo would roll the dirt and eventually shallow oblong depressions were formed. Buffalo wallows can still be found in areas where the prairie has never been disturbed. Occasionally, one of these great beasts was shot for the meat and warm robes that the buffalo hides produced.

The Smoky Hill River was full of fish. John Hedberg related that when he was a boy, he couldn't see the bed of the river for the fish; the bottom was black with them. Antelope, deer, elk, wild turkey, prairie chicken and quail were in abundance throughout the valley. One day a herd of twenty-three antelope ran by the Olaf Olson home, and he succeeded in killing one.<sup>25</sup>

The Swedes were not the only settlers in the Smoky Valley. There were a few Americans, as they called any non-Swede, who also homesteaded in the valley. Most of the people in Salina were either of German or Scotch-Irish extraction. On the western boundary of the Galesburg lands were also several non-Swedish homesteaders such as James Claypool and John Hughes.

The Swedes often found new and different experiences with inventions in America that were still unknown in Sweden. No words in the Swedish language could be found to describe the new and unusual. The Swedes answer to this



blem was to take the English word and add the suffix "en" or "er" to form a new word. Such words as "railroaden" and "Indianer" and "tomahawken" entered this rapidly changing Swedish-English dialect.

The Swedish people were very concerned and afraid of the Indians who were occasionally seen in the valley. They read the accounts of Indian raids in eastern newspapers, heard rumors, and were highly suspicious of any sightings of the Native Americans. They also knew of the incident involving Mrs. Bassett just south of present day Marquette. In September of 1868, within days of the visit to the area of the Galesburg search committee, a band of Osage Indians raided the dugout home of the Bassetts. Mr. Bassett had gone for supplies leaving Mrs. Bassett and the baby at home. The Indians came into the house, ransacked it, carried away all of her clothing and Bassett's gun and ammunition. They then stripped the woman and put her on a horse in front of an Indian and gave her the baby. They rode off with their captives, but after a time they tired of the white woman and baby. The Chief ordered her returned to her home. Her husband soon found her dressed in an old soldier coat and pants. Mrs. Bassett survived her ordeal but within a few days her baby died.

To make matters worse, in May of 1869, a family of Swedes named Elmquist, living northwest of Salina, were attacked by Indians. As rumors of more attacks swelled, the Americans and Swedes worked together and built a fort.

The fort was located in section 29 of Sharps Creek Township in McPherson County, about one half mile west and a mile south of the present town of Marquette. The fort was built far enough away from the Smoky Hill River that the Indians could not use the trees along the river for cover. The fort was made of sod walls about two to four feet thick and eight feet high. It was thirty feet square and covered with a sod roof resting on the poles. The walls of the fort had many portholes to shoot through. When the following incident occurred in July of 1869, the settlers moved into the fort and stayed there for about six weeks.<sup>26</sup>

Emil Hanson wrote:

"When grandfather (Anders Erickson) and Uncle Erik were breaking sod just south of the Hanson 80, they suddenly saw a large group of horsemen coming toward them from the Alfred Hawkinson hill less than a mile away. They did not even take time to unyoke the oxen but ran to their dugout to get grandma and mother who happened to be there and made haste on foot to reach the sod fort. Grandma always walked with a cane and could not keep up with the others. Grandma told them to run on ahead, if the Indians came near she would hide in the bushes along the river. Mother said Erik, who was only twelve cried when they left her. People were running from every direction to the fort. The last man to arrive at the fort was Wilbur Burton. He had a team, and was thoughtful enough to bring a barrel of water in his wagon. His claim was on Wolf Creek about a mile away. The horsemen that scared them kept to the north side

of the river and passed over our 80 north of the depot.

The same day, father (Hans Hanson) and others were helping J. M. Underwood put up hay on what later became the John A. Peterson place, two miles north and two miles west of the present Marquette. When the people saw these horsemen approach, they knew it would be too dangerous to try to make it to the fort. Underwood had been a captain in the Civil War. He took charge. He told them all to lie down in the six foot tall blue stem grass, load all the guns and revolvers or horse pistols. 'Keep your heads down; I will do the looking.' Father said he was so excited and scared that he would drop the bullets in the grass; it was so hot down in the tall grass that he could hardly see on account of the sweat in his eyes. He said he thought he could hear his heart beat. Why Not? In a short time he might be dead. Finally, Underwood told them they could all stand up. When he saw the U. S. flag, he knew the horsemen were not Indians, but U.S. soldiers on their way to Ft. Harker near Kanopolis. It gave all the settlers a terrible scare because they all believed it was a large band of Indians on the warpath."<sup>27</sup>

The people stayed at the fort, ready to defend themselves. But when no violence occurred, the panic subsided.

As time passed Indians became common sights around the Swedish homesteads. They were usually Kansa Indians and not above petty theft, but usually very friendly. Some pioneers never lost their fear of these Native Americans, while

others became acquainted with individuals and often shared food with them.<sup>28</sup>

Most of the new settlers were very poor. A good portion of their meager funds had been used for travel expenses on the trip to Kansas. They also spent what little money they had on filing fees for homestead land or the down payment for railroad land. Supplies and the necessities of survival took the rest of their money. Until crops were harvested in the fall, the men needed to find outside work to help support their families. During the slack season in the winter many farmers also searched for outside work.

The Kansas Pacific Railroad was the largest employer in central Kansas in 1869. Many of the newly arrived Swedes found work laying track for the railroad. August Sandberg, Peter Englund and many other Swedes worked for the Kansas Pacific.<sup>29</sup> John Englund wrote of the railroad work years later:

"The Union Pacific Railroad, (Kansas Pacific), which was under construction from Brookville to Denver used as many men as applied for work. Brookville was larger than now, for the railroad division headquarters were there with an enormous roundhouse, several hotels and many homes occupied by railroad employees. The heads of families and grown boys found work with the construction crew during the winter months. They received two dollars a day but no board. After boarding themselves each season, a sum of money was saved to be carried back to the homesteads. For three years this proved to be a good source of income, but after the road was completed beyond Ellis, few continued to seek road work during the slack season on the farms."<sup>30</sup>

Otto and Axel Esping also worked for several years laying track for the Kansas Pacific Railroad and the Union Pacific in Nebraska and Wyoming. Otto Esping kept a detailed diary of his experiences while working for the railroad. The railroad section crew that the Esping brothers worked on was a mix of Swedes and Irishmen. Esping often mentioned the heavy drinking and the violence of the railroad men. Esping's entry for Monday, July 19, 1869, is a good example of the life of a Swede on a section crew:

"There was a bloody battle among the companions today. I separated them several times and came near to having my eyes blackened for my trouble. They were not satisfied with the fighting but soon they went into the house and soon both chairs and boots began to dance. Mrs. Swarts became so frightened that she trembled. Mr. Swarts took a club and hit Scott on the head so hard that he lost consciousness, and then hit him all over the body until he was almost dead. And the poor man was quite innocent. He only stood and watched. When I saw this I almost became furious. I ran to get my gun, but it was hidden, otherwise I would have put a bullet through him. Oh, the condemned whiskey when it takes the upper hand, what swine it makes of the miserable men. They were all so quiet and decent before they began to drink, but I had a feeling that it would go this way with the Irish rabble."<sup>31</sup>

Often the Swedes worked together to solve the problems posed by this new land. Carl Stromquist wrote about the monetary difficulties of that first year in the Smoky Valley:

"It was necessary to have horses or oxen in order to bring this land under cultivation. Oxen were the most suitable; they cost less, and were cheaper to feed because they were able to thrive very well on grass alone. There was an abundance of grass here. The problem was how to get enough money with which to buy the oxen. It was decided that two or three persons should buy a pair of oxen, a plow, and the other necessary articles. One of the men remained at home to plow his own and the other's land. The other two men went away to work to earn money. Money was sent home to provide those at home means by which to buy necessities. Thus the work was done in a brotherly way. It was so arranged that the one who remained at home would replace one of the others, so that each man would be able to care for his own farm at some time."<sup>32</sup>

The women and girls were often put to work to bring money into the family. The wives of these pioneer farmers were burdened with such heavy toil that their youthful vigor and beauty disappeared well before its time and was replaced by years of constant childrearing, housecleaning, washing, and cooking. Women also contributed to the backbreaking field work. Soon lines of worry and care appeared on their

faces, followed by gray hair and gauntness that accompanied years of hard work.

Most often the Swedish girls were sent to the homes of established families to work as serving girls and maids. Many were sent to Brookville or Salina to work in the hotels or private homes where they earned a dollar a day plus room and board. They soon learned the backbreaking toil which was to be their future. Some received rudiments of education, but frequently they could neither read nor write.

Lovisa Anderson, the daughter of Jacob Anderson, traveled with her family to the Smoky Valley with the Galesburg Company in February of 1869.

"Soon after, the seventeen year old girl started working in Salina for a family who lived near the present site of the Union Station. She stayed at this place three months. She had to carry all of the drinking water and all of the water used for washing. The well where Lovisa could draw water was three quarter of a mile away. Later she worked for the William Maxwell family near Mentor. She stayed with them for three years."<sup>33</sup>

The Swedish pioneers in the Smoky Valley began to settle in and become established. More Swedes from Illinois were taking lands to the east of the Galesburg Colony. Any untaken lands were soon claimed as the valley became more densely populated. Young Carl G. Linholm came with his family to Kansas in October of 1869. His memoirs remain one

of the most outstanding accounts of the early pioneer days with the Swedes in the Smoky Valley. He wrote:

"It was at early dawn on a bright October morning in 1869 that the writer with parents and seven of us children arrived over the Union Pacific at Salina, Kansas having immigrated from Swedonia, Ill. Salina at that time was a town of several small stores, a post office, and a number of scattered houses, one hotel, "The Pacific House" near the depot, and having a population of perhaps several hundred. The main street seemed rather wide owing to the low one-story buildings. A young, half grown buffalo, rather tame was wandering about; presumably having been captured on the prairies and now used as a pet, or in using a modern term, the town mascot.

We were met by a Mr. Sandberg who had preceded us to Kansas and had homesteaded about fifteen miles toward the southwest and joining that upon which we were to settle. With Mr. Sandberg in a lumber wagon we proceeded several miles south then angled across the rough prairies. A few days previous to this one of those extensive prairie fires common in that day had passed over the central and western part of the state and everywhere we looked it was black. We had the sensation of riding as over a rough and black sea. Some burnt stubble from the heaviest blue stem was still standing and over the tops of these spiders had living myriads of silken threads giving the appearance of a shining silvery pathway in looking toward the sun, the same as the reflection of the sun over a body of moving waters.

In scanning the bleak prairies we noticed here and there some white objects which proved to be skeletons of buffalo, bleached by the sun and



fire until white as chalk, and near these bones were the white skulls, rather short and broad giving the appearance of a human skull staring at us out of the black background, a rather gruesome sight, indeed.

Another object of interest held our attention. As we looked in the direction we were traveling we could see over the sunny heat waves rising over the prairie creating a mirage, a range of mounds, their summits almost hid in a blue haze or smoke, all the way they appeared to be only a short distance ahead of us but it was high noon when we reached our destination and still a mile east of what proved to be what were called "The Smoky Buttes" a range of bluffs running four miles toward the south and terminating at what is now named Coronado Heights and which are thought to be the range of small mountains mentioned by the great explorer Coronado as he viewed them from across a small river. These bluffs at that time were literally covered by large rocks and huge boulders, from base to summit, some of these standing upright like castles on the hillsides, others projected out of the ground at an angle testifying to the great subterranean upheaval that had taken pace in ages past."<sup>34</sup>

In November of 1869, another group of Swedes occupied the land west of the Galesburg Company lands. This new company of Swedes was led by Major Eric Forsee, former commander of the 57th Illinois Infantry Regiment in the Civil War. This group consisted of about forty adults and numerous children. Among this company were Major Forsee's son Olaf, Peter Soderberg, Fred Nelson, John Daleen, John

Ericson, and Olaf Rundquist. These Swedes came from the Bishop Hill Colony, north of Galesburg. The Bishop Hill Swedes believed in a "free church" and so were looking for a place near other Swedes but isolated enough that they could practice their form of religion openly and in peace. They formed the Falun community, named for the birthplace of Major Forsee in Sweden, as well as the home of many of the other Swedes who settled there.<sup>35</sup>

In late September, Holmkvist and Danielson went back to Dekalb to bring their families to their new home, near the present site of Smolan, Kansas. Gust Holmkvist stayed behind to care for all three homesteads.

John Danielson had expected to be in Dekalb only a short time, but preparations to leave took longer than expected. The men organized a covered wagon caravan to travel to Kansas. They had been in Dekalb for years and freighting their accumulated possessions to Kansas would have been very expensive. Among the families who made the journey were those of John Danielson, August Mattson, Johannes Holmkvist, Johan Berquist, and Charley Rodine.

The trip also took longer than expected and the wagons did not arrive in the Smoky Valley until late November of 1869. Eleven-year-old Anna Danielson, the daughter of John Danielson, vividly remembered walking barefoot alongside the wagon in snowdrifts during the last few days before they reached their new home.<sup>36</sup>

The emigration of Swedes to the Smoky Valley was nearly complete. By 1872 all the land within the valley was taken. A community had formed near the center of the American continent where the Swedish language and customs were more common than that of the Americans. The homeless finally found a home. It was time to plant both crops and roots on the prairie of Kansas. A whole culture was established where a year earlier none existed.

The Swedish people that came to Kansas in the years 1868-1869 came under one condition: that their pastor would also come and establish the Swedish Lutheran Church to give them the peace, hope and spiritual guidance they would need to survive in the Smoky Valley of Kansas.

## Chapter 5

### The Peaceful Mountain

On February 23, 1869, a train filled with Swedes hoping for a bright promising future, left Galesburg, Illinois, bound for the Kansas prairie. Aboard that train were many members of First Lutheran's congregation. Their young pastor, A. W. Dahlsten, bade them farewell that day, knowing that he had made a promise of building a spiritual home alongside their physical home in the Smoky Valley. Now he intended to keep that promise.

Dahlsten's first task was to finish his work at First Lutheran Church. The church had become crowded over the years as the number of Swedes increased in Galesburg. Dahlsten's work through counseling, feeding, and schooling so many of his parishioners and the new immigrants, had strained the capacity of the rickety old church buildings. The original structure, built in 1852, could no longer meet the demands of the congregation. Plans to build a new church were blocked during the summer of 1868 by the hyper-evangelicals in the parish. It was hoped that by blocking the building plans, Pastor Dahlsten and the church council would be forced to accept their demands about service structure and allow more fundamentalist teachings within Lutheran Doctrine. When the church council and the Augustana

synod refused to accept these changes, a rift formed that ultimately led to a substantial number of the congregation leaving First Lutheran. They formed a new congregation, Second Lutheran, in August of 1868.<sup>1</sup>

The departure of the "Galesburg dissenters" from First Lutheran brought back the unity of theological thought and conservative Lutheranism for which Dahlsten had hoped. The second departure of the Kansas bound pioneers in February of 1869 also had a great impact on the congregation. Many of those who left for Kansas had been members of First Lutheran for years, and held positions of leadership in the church as well as the community. The void of leadership was filled by others in Galesburg, but the empty pews and absent friends were long missed by those who remained behind.

By the beginning of March, most of the remaining members of Dahlsten's congregation were established members of the Galesburg community. They decided to stay and build their lives there. They were committed to renewing First Lutheran and planned their long-term future in Illinois. Dahlsten continued to lobby his congregation to vote for building a new church. Finally, on April 4, 1869, after a year of turmoil and upheaval, the church council voted to pass the building project. The new church would be a large brick building with a single tall spire. Pastor Dahlsten, however would not oversee the construction of this great church he labored so long to build. His mission was

completed. One week later, on April 11, 1869, A. W. Dahlsten resigned as pastor of First Lutheran Church.<sup>2</sup>

Dahlsten made the most fateful decision of his life. We can only speculate about his future had he stayed in Illinois. He quickly rose to become pastor of one of the largest churches in the Augustana Synod while still a very young man. Dahlsten was well connected through marriage and friendship to the power structure within the Augustana Synod. He was also renowned for his brilliant scholarship. His predecessor at First Lutheran, T.N. Hasselquist, ascended to the position of President of Augustana College. Had Dahlsten remained in Illinois, he most likely would have achieved high office and an important leadership role within the Augustana Synod.

Dahlsten told the crowd assembled at the Galesburg Company meeting that he would follow God's will and go where God sent him. God did send him, not to the halls of power within the hierarchy of the Lutheran Church, not to the money, prestige and power that those positions would have given him, but to a distant prairie where churches needed building, where people desperately needed the word of God to comfort and guide them, and where a man of tireless energy and spirit could lead a people home to the peaceful mountain.

## Building a Parish

The pioneers who left Galesburg for Kansas had the difficult task of building a new life in the Smoky Valley. Their thoughts and efforts were concentrated on establishing homes and farms on this barren prairie. Two men, however, provided the leadership and the focus to forge these individuals into a community. C. J. Brodine and John Rodell worked tirelessly to establish Lutheran congregations among the Swedish people of Kansas.

Within days of arriving in the Smoky Valley, the first worship service was held at the dugout home of J. P. Stromquist. "August Frost, C. J. Brodine, J. P. Rodell, the three Thorstenberg brothers, and a few others crowded in for the night. In the morning, C. J. Brodine gave a talk, had Bible reading, and a prayer. This was the first public church service held within the confines of the Freemount Parish."<sup>3</sup> The Stromquist home became the location of *Postilla* services for the rest of the spring.

John Rodell was a sincere Christian and eager to begin a church in the community. He invited everyone to come back on Sunday for services. Rodell walked from homestead to homestead inviting everyone to attend worship. "He was a noble man, very enterprising, maybe more enterprising than cautious."<sup>4</sup>

Other Swedes were also beginning to join together in worship services in the valley. F. G. Hawkinson wrote many years later about the first service he attended in Kansas:

"It was a typical Kansas May morning. As we were sitting there looking at the beauties of nature and listening to the birds sing, some one remarked: 'How nice it would be if we could attend some church service this fine morning!' I suggested that we have a service right here. All consented to that. Then I went to my trunk and took out Martin Luther's *Postilla* that our mother had sent us. I asked some of the older men to take the lead and read the sermon of that day. Mr. Feldt was the oldest and he consented to read. Brother Charles lead the singing and we sang No. 3 in our Swedish Psalm Book, '*Oss Välsinga och Bevara*'. (Bless and Preserve Us). Mr. Feldt was not a very fluent reader but by spelling some of the hard words, he stumbled through. It took him two hours. He closed by reading the Lord's Prayer and Charles led in singing 'A Mighty Fortress is Our God' in Swedish. Thus closed the first religious service of the earliest settlers on the band on the east side of the Smoky Hill River, one half mile south and one mile west of where Marquette is now located."<sup>5</sup>

C. J. Brodine and John Rodell traveled up and down the valley promoting a church. Rodell went door-to-door asking people to come to a meeting at the Stromquist homestead on June 12, 1869.<sup>6</sup> F.G. Hawkinson wrote:

"To organize Swedish Lutheran congregations and to build and maintain churches to worship in according to our Lutheran faith was the principle desire of the colonists from the beginning. Mr. John Rodell took the lead in this work from the very first of our settlement. In the first part of June, 1869, he came walking afoot, to the rest of us and asked us to attend a meeting to be held



Saturday afternoon, June 12, at John P. Stromquist's home for the purpose of organizing a Swedish Lutheran congregation."<sup>7</sup>

The next week there was to be an Augustana Synod meeting in Moline, Illinois. The people could not wait any longer to send a petition for admittance if they wanted it accepted by the synod at this meeting.

Rodell also told those he spoke to, that the Galesburg Company people were there first and that they ought to be the first ones to organize a church in the valley. Olof Olsson was already on his way to Lindsborg and as soon as he arrived a church would be organized and their chance to be first would be lost.<sup>8</sup>

The meeting was held on June 12, 1869. There were at that time thirty-eight Swedish people in the locality, twenty-three men, eight women, and seven children. Of this group, eighteen men took part in the meeting including: John Rodell, J. P. Stromquist, Gustaf Cederholm, August Freeberg, Hans Hanson, William Johnson, P. A. Feldt, F. G. Hawkinson, and others. J. P. Stromquist believed there to be about fifty men at the meeting. Probably the exact number fell somewhere in the middle of the two estimates. Decades later, Freemount's Pastor J. P. Aurelius wrote about the founding of the church:

"Mr. Rodell opened the meeting with a Bible reading and prayer. He was made chairman and John P. Stromquist, Secretary. The first question we considered was, should we or should we not

organize a congregation at that time. That question was decided in the affirmative, unanimously. The next was what name should be given to the congregation. Several names were proposed and considered. Mr. William Johnson proposed Fremont; as a motive he said that as John C. Fremont was the forerunner of civilization in the Southwest, so we hoped that this church organization would be a forerunner of the Swedish Evangelical Lutheran churches in the Southwest. Therefore, he said he thought that Fremont would be appropriate and made that as a motion. The motion passed unanimously.

There were no samples of any congregational constitutions obtainable. After some discussion, John Rodell said: "We have all been members of congregations in the east and are well acquainted with the constitution for congregations, so we can without hesitation accept it.

We did not elect trustees or deacons because we did not know how many were required but in our petition for admittance in the Synod, we asked to be advised on this point and if there was anything lacking in the organization to be so informed or a minister sent out as soon as practical. We sent a man on horseback with our letter containing our petition to Salina, our nearest post office, in order to get our letter to the Synod on time. Our letter came in due time. There was no objection to our petition or to the name of the congregation, and we were, together with fourteen other congregations, accepted and taken into the Augustana Synod on the 23rd day of June, 1869."<sup>9</sup>

The people of the newly formed Freemount Church continued to meet at the home of John P. Stromquist for months. The location chosen for the church was the southeast quarter of Section 19, Township 17 South, Range 4 West, McPherson County, Kansas. A church building was not constructed for some time after the organizational meeting. Construction of the building began in February of 1870. It was built out of stone and measured twenty-four feet by

forty-two feet. The men quarried sandstone from the Smoky Bluffs and lime for the mortar was mined from Indian Creek. The first worship service in the new church was celebrated on the third Sunday of May, 1870. The people were so anxious to begin Sunday worship in the new church that they didn't even wait for completion of the roof. The Stone Church at Freemount still survives and is considered the oldest building still in use in McPherson County.<sup>10</sup>

The building of homes and the establishing of farms was uppermost in the hearts, and minds, of all of the pioneers. They were anxious to conclude this phase of their journey and complete homes for their families. All of the families were weary and wanted to hurry the task of building a home to insure a bit of comfort for themselves in the coming days.

John Rodell and C. J. Brodine were concerned with the establishment of spiritual homes on the prairies. Most of the pioneers also felt this need and welcomed Brodine when he walked to the homesteads in the northern part of the Galesburg Company lands. At every farm he visited, he talked about developing a church in the new settlement and invited each family to attend a meeting at his home to discuss the possibility. The long journey by foot was difficult, but worth the final effort. The new settlers gathered at the Brodine place on Wednesday, June 16, 1869, to talk about the establishment of a new church congregation in their community.

To the new pioneers, Brodine's house (located two and one half miles south of where the city of Smolan would later be located), must have been a promise of good times to come. Built of native stone, it was the only building big enough to accommodate the large number of people who attended the meeting. Among those who gathered to the Brodine home on that June morning were Måns Peterson, Bengt Hessler, Johan Ekholm, A. Bohlund, the Thorstenberg brothers, J. W. Peterson, Jacob Anderson, and the Holmkvist brothers. Many women and children also attended the meeting.<sup>11</sup>

The historic meeting opened with a prayer in which Brodine asked for guidance for the assembled pioneers. An election of officers was held with Brodine elected chairman, and J. W. Peterson, secretary.

The question was put to those assembled whether they were willing to organize a parish and begin the formidable task of building a church to house the new congregation. Those assembled gave this question a mighty, resounding and unanimous "Yes." Undoubtedly, the adoption of a church constitution was neglected. The soul's zeal for a place of worship came first in the minds of the pioneers.<sup>12</sup>

When the affirmation for the building was received, the group elected a committee to find a location and supervise the construction of the church. C. J. Brodine, A. Bohlund and O. H. Thorstenberg were chosen to the building committee. A second committee was formed to begin collecting subscriptions for the construction costs. This monumental

task was placed on the shoulders of Johan Ekholm, J. P. Miltman and John Holmberg.

The committees met the following Thursday to report back on their progress. The meeting was adjourned and the assembled people returned to their homesteads with a new mission, and the hope for a spiritual home in their hearts.

The second meeting was held on Thursday, June 28th, 1869, at the Brodine homestead. It was a time of great hope for the assembled people. After much thought and careful consideration, the committee agreed on a site for the new church. The place they chose was the northwest quarter of Section 5, Township 16 South, Range 3 West, Saline County, Kansas. The property lay at the top of a grassy knoll, right in the center of the Smoky Valley, with a commanding view of the surrounding prairie in all directions. To the south lay the heart of the valley and the Smoky Hill River. The crest of the Smoky Bluffs lay to the southwest and held the most prominent position in the landscape. To the west lay the rolling pasture lands, topped by one unmistakable hill. This hill was called "Soldiers Cap" and resembled from every direction the kepis worn by the soldiers of both armies in the recent war. The north was dotted by the cottonwoods that grew along Dry Creek and occasionally a wisp of smoke from the chimneys in Salina could be spotted. On the eastern horizon the Smoky Hill River wound its way toward the north and east. This was the perfect site to build God's house.

This tract of land was purchased from the National Land Company for \$2.50 per acre. With few obstacles left, plans were made to begin construction of the church within a week of this second meeting. The building itself would be a combination dugout and sod house, forty feet long and twenty feet wide, with a rock foundation.

The pioneers made great strides in providing a church home for themselves. It was just a building, but more than that, a place to gather together for the important moments of their lives. It would be a place where their spiritual needs in these difficult and trying times could be met and a place to gather socially. The farms were far enough apart on this vast prairie and their lives were so busy in providing basic survival needs for their families, that they had little time left for socializing. Coming together for church services and other functions would provide this essential respite for the people.

The discussion turned to the naming of the new church. In a lengthy speech, C. J. Brodine explained the meaning and significance of a name which he felt would be appropriate. The name he suggested was "Salemsberg." Brodine asked the people to refer to their *Den Svensk Psalm-Boken*, (The Swedish Psalm Book), a small, pocket-sized church hymnal which contained hymns, lessons and daily devotions. Each family had a copy of this small, Swedish hymnal as it was used so frequently. The *Psalmbok* was published in 1819 and included the writings of several Lutheran authors. Many of

the verses in the hymns were written by J. O. Wallin, and Brodine requested they look at Hymn 500. This particular hymn, titled 'Slutpsalm' or 'End Psalm' has seven verses and leads the singers through the different passages of life. It was verse number four of this poignant hymn which Brodine wanted the people to see. It explained so well his choice for the name of their new church.

Hymn 500, verse 4:

*O min själ! du skall dig svinga  
Till det Salems berg en gång,  
Där kerubers harpor klinga  
Bland de sällas segersång:  
Låt ditt lof, ditt böneljud  
Gå i förväg hem till Gud,  
Medan än du, följd af sorgen,  
Irrar utom fadersborgen. 13*

The English translation of this beautiful passage is:

*O my soul, you shall soar  
to the peaceful mountain one time,  
There cherubs harps ring  
among the blessed victory song.  
Sound thy praise, thine prayer sounds  
go ahead, home to God.  
While even you, in consequence of sorrow,  
Wander beyond the father's security. 14*

"Salems berg" or the "peaceful mountain" in this hymn refers to the end of life's journey, that ending place where peace, joy and contentment may finally be reached.

These settlers certainly hoped that they were finally at the end of their journey and could settle in this valley. Many of these Swedish people had been on this journey for years. They believed the hard, bleak years in Sweden were far behind. Their immigration to America and settling in Illinois provided the life of freedom and contentment they had yearned for so long. But when these dreams faded among the strife, hardships and difficulties they encountered in Illinois, they made another journey seeking a peaceful conclusion to this phase of their unsettled lives. They hoped that calm and peace could be found on the plains of Kansas.

Brodine's impassioned speech and the reading of Hymn 500 convinced the Swedes that his choice of the name signified the peace they sought. "Salemsberg" was enthusiastically adopted as the name for their new spiritual home. On that Thursday in June, they hoped that on this "peaceful mountain" in the fertile Smoky Valley, they would find the peace, prosperity and the hope for better lives which they had been searching for in the past.<sup>15</sup>

After all business was completed, the meeting was adjourned with a prayer which was led by C. J. Brodine.<sup>16</sup>

Soon after the June 28th meeting, the committee began a subscription, and a total of \$253.09 was raised to build



their church. Two-thirds of this money came, not from the new Swedes in the valley, but from the "Americans" of Salina.<sup>17</sup> The cost of building for the church reached a total of \$212.84. "Perhaps that seemingly small amount of money was a greater sacrifice to the pioneers than the great sums which are a part of our present time."<sup>18</sup>

Work progressed quickly on the construction of the church. Within the week, men hauled rock from the Smoky Hill Bluffs for the foundation and plowed sod from the surrounding ground. Wood was cut for rafters from the few trees on Dry Creek. The lumber and supplies, purchased for the building, were carried from Salina on the shoulders of the men. Before long, the crude church, a combination sod house and dugout was completed. The lower part of the building was dug down into the ground, and the top half was built up above the level of the surrounding sod.<sup>19</sup>

The floor of the new church was packed dirt which became muddy and sticky when the sod building was damp. On many occasions the shoes of the congregation became stuck in this muddy, clay floor during worship services.

Another problem was that rattlesnakes would slither into the damp, cool sod building during the week. One young boy was given the formidable task on Sunday mornings of removing the snakes before the worshipers arrived.<sup>20</sup>

Letters to the offices of the Augustana Synod in Chicago were sent for the purpose of recognizing the new Salemsberg Congregation and for requesting a pastor be sent

to the Smoky Valley to officially organize the Salemsberg and Freemount congregations. Their request was granted and in September of 1869, Pastor Dahlsten was sent as a representative of the synod to organize the congregations.

The meetings to officially organize both the Salemsberg and the Freemount congregations were held separately on September 25, 1869. The meeting to organize the Freemount congregation was called to order at J. P. Stromquist's cabin. Pastor Dahlsten was present at this meeting and served as chairman. The formal constitution was discussed, item by item, and the final draft was accepted. As deacons they chose John Rodell, Gust Cederholm, John Stromquist, G. F. Lundstrom, August Freeburg, and A. P. Lindquist. The trustees, John Rodell and Anders Erickson, were also elected. The following day, September 26, 1869, Pastor Dahlsten led the first service of the organized Freemount congregation. 21

Saturday, September 25, 1869, was also the day that the Salemsberg congregation met to organize. 22

"According to a former announcement a general meeting was held September 25, 1869, with the already partly organized congregation in Salemsberg in order to complete the organization of the same. The meeting began with Bible reading, prayer, and a sermon. Olaf Peterson was elected chairman and since the secretary of the congregation was not present, Carl H. Thorstenburg was elected pro tem. The constitution was read thoroughly and accepted. The following were elected deacons: C. J. Brodine and O. H. Thorstenburg for three years; A. Bohlund and L. M. Peterson for two years; A. Sandberg and A. Frost

for one year or until the new annual meeting. Trustees were: Olaf Peterson for three years; Johan Ekholm for two years; S. P. Holmberg for one year or until the next meeting. The congregation voted unanimously to ask to be admitted into the Augustana Synod at its next meeting. The meeting was adjourned with prayer, asking God's richest blessing on the new congregation." 23

Because Pastor Dahlsten was not able to attend the meeting in Salemsberg scheduled that same day, a second meeting was called on September 30th. The meeting was held in the sod church with the purpose of calling a Pastor. The only candidate considered was Pastor Dahlsten. He was unanimously elected and a formal call was made to him to become the pastor for both Salemsberg and Freemount Churches. The two congregations agreed that the pastor's parsonage would be built at Salemsberg.

The congregation also decided to work together with Freemount and unite on church matters which would concern both congregations. August Sandberg and Johan Ekholm would consult with Freemount on any mutual concerns of the parish. It was also voted upon and passed that the pastor would be granted extra salary if he would assume the educational responsibilities of the congregation.<sup>24</sup>

The weather in Kansas was wet and rainy in the days following this meeting at Salemsberg. On October 2nd, the south wall of the sod church collapsed. The dirt walls were not able to withstand the harsh weather that repeatedly hit the area. As soon as possible, the walls were rebuilt using

stone. Eaves were put on the roof which would from then on cause the rain to flow away from the walls and foundation of the church. Even with these improvements in the building, it remained crude and uncomfortable.

Pastor J. A. Frost, whose childhood was spent at Salemsberg, remembered in a letter to the congregation years later:

"I remember well the dugout church, where during rainy weather one had to place loose boards within the alter ring to keep from standing in several inches of water when conducting services. But even under such conditions the Lord was present and blessed His word and the people who were more faithful in attendance, even though they walked on foot to the church or rode behind oxen. As a member of the first confirmation class in the dugout church, at which alter I pledged my confirmation vows to God and for the first time kneeled to receive the true body and blood of Christ, therefore the memory of the simple church is dearer to me than the most beautiful temple."<sup>25</sup>

Soon after the September 30th meeting at Salemsberg, Pastor Dahlsten returned to Galesburg. Years later, in a letter to Eric Norelius, Dahlsten wrote (in the third person): "After his arrival home Pastor Dahlsten received a call from the newly-founded congregation. Although not properly founded, neither church nor pastor's home, the pastor dared, in God's name to accept the call. As we remember he had previously given a half promise. He must now depend on God and loyal old friends. Never has he regretted that step, although (during) the first years, poverty and

privations were not few."<sup>26</sup> Dahlsten then went about the business of concluding his affairs in Galesburg and preparing himself and his family for the move to Kansas.

Another business meeting was held on the 7th of November, 1869. At this meeting the congregation decided to build a parsonage at Salemsberg in preparation for the arrival of Pastor Dahlsten and his family. The home would be of stone construction with a frame roof, and the dimensions of twenty feet long by fourteen feet wide. A committee consisting of C. J. Brodine, O. H. Thorstenberg, Nels Magnuson, and Carl Frank were named to begin the selection of the site for the parsonage and to supervise construction.

Money was again needed from the members of the congregation for the building fund. Freemount and Salemsberg would share in this fund raising project. The amount of \$225.19 was received from the two congregations. When the construction was finished, \$202.19 was spent on building materials. The extra \$23.00 was returned to the Freemount congregation. Each person and family in both congregations contributed something towards this building fund, each according to their means. The sums ranged from ten cents up to \$15.00 which showed that each had tried to contribute as much as they were able.<sup>27</sup>

The work on the parsonage was completed in late November, just in time for the arrival of the new pastor and his family. Pastor Dahlsten, his wife, Wilhemina Dahlsten, and their four-year-old daughter, Anna, arrived at the end

of November, 1869. Later Dahlsten in a letter to his friend Norelius wrote: "How bright and beautiful was our congregational life the first year in our new settlement! Almost all were poor, but united."<sup>28</sup>

Pastor Dahlsten conducted the first communion service at Salemsberg on November 29, 1869. A large crowd gathered for the services that morning to welcome their old friend to the new parish in the valley.

Dahlsten was not alone in the spiritual work of the church in the Smoky Valley. To the south of Salemsberg was a new settlement called Lindsborg. The Swedes there also organized a congregation that summer of 1869. The Bethany Church called Olof Olsson to be their pastor and he arrived with many of his parishioners from Sweden in late June.

A. W. Dahlsten and Olsson had been classmates in the Fjellstedt School in Sweden. They had resumed their friendship through correspondence several years earlier and they had become close friends. It must have seemed strange that they would be reunited years later, serving neighboring congregations on the Kansas prairie, half way round the world from their former homeland. Dahlsten wrote:

"The old and the young shall become friends fast. Olsson and Dahlsten who now were dwelling in each his county but however only nine miles from one another had much to share.....

In this way they took charge of the mighty settlements of colonies: Salemsberg in Saline County and Lindsborg and Freemount (south part of the Galesburg Kolonie) in McPherson County."<sup>29</sup>

In December, 1869, Pastor Dahlsten began his ministry to both the Freemount and Salemsberg congregations. They worked out an arrangement where each congregation would have morning services on alternate Sundays. Salemsberg would have morning services and Freemount would have afternoon services. The following week the schedule would be reversed. Pastor Dahlsten would ride his horse to Freemount and conduct worship, then remount his horse and ride back to Salemsberg for the afternoon services. Each Sunday Dahlsten rode nearly 40 miles and he accomplished this remarkable weekly ride every Sunday for three years in all kinds of varied Kansas weather.

The first year in this new settlement, the Swedes were very prosperous. Dahlsten wrote: "The summer of 1869 we had the most desirable weather, so they who had sown received an almost incredible crop. That was the greatest achievement for the Kansas Colonies."<sup>30</sup> Many more people from Sweden would join them over the next few years, until the land was taken and the countryside was filled with neighbors and friends from the old country.

The arrival of the Christmas season brought a unique joy for the Swedish pioneers in the Smoky Valley. The prosperous year meant improvements to homes, bountiful supplies of food harvested from the virgin soil and most important, a sense of well being. God had smiled kindly upon their bold and daring adventure onto the plains. The

community had drawn together in the building of their church at Salemsberg and there was a sense of togetherness and joy in the hearts of the people. It was traditional for the Swedes to celebrate Christmas with friends and family. This year, many special and joyful thanks were given to God because their journey was completed and they were finally home.

In the Freemount community the neighbors gathered together at the Feldt dugout. They did not have a church building yet, but even so they were a congregation. Christmas morning was the time for *Julotta*.<sup>31</sup> The early morning service began at five o'clock - that cold, dark predawn hour of the day. Anna Sjogren Carlson, a girl of eleven that winter of 1869 recalled:

"The first Christmas morning was celebrated at the Feldt dugout, one quarter mile east of the Lindquist home, (north of Marquette). Mr. Lindquist led the singing. Mr. Feldt read the service from the *Postilla*, (an old Swedish hymn book), and the hymn 'Var Hälsad Sköna Morgonstund', (All Hail To Thee O Blessed Morn), was sung. Those present were the Feldt, Lindquist, Sjogren, Hedberg, Hans Hanson, Olaf and Andrew Erickson families. It was a wonderful service and everyone was happy that they could celebrate their first Christmas together in this country."<sup>32</sup>

*Julotta* services were also held at Salemsberg Lutheran Church on that first Christmas morning in Kansas. The dugout church was filled with most of the Swedish pioneers in the community. They came from miles away, walking, riding in



wagons pulled by oxen, or on horseback, bundled against the cold, biting frost of a winter morning. They were drawn to this place by the desire to worship in the traditional Lutheran manner, with pastor and neighbors, thankful to be finally ending their journey and staking a permanent claim to the new land.

At first there was nothing to penetrate the darkness except the heavy breathing of the straining oxen. Soon however, a tiny flicker of light came into view, like a beacon to the hopeful families. As they neared the tiny dugout church the light grew and the paths became swelled with friends wishing "*God Jul!*" (Merry Christmas). When they entered the crowded earthen sanctuary, a bright warm glow greeted them. A *ljuskrona* had been placed on the altar and its light filled the hearts of the worshipers with the hope, new life, and joy that always springs eternal with the celebration of the Christ Child's birth.

Pastor Dahlsten led the worship that morning, but no one remembered what hymns were sung or the text of his message. The one memory the pioneers had was the *ljuskrona* that lighted the altar that morning.

*Ljuskrona*, translated into English means "light crown." These paper-wrapped candelabra were common in Sweden and positioned in a place of honor according to Swedish tradition. C. J. Brodine built this special *ljuskrona*, in the days just prior to Christmas, as his gift to the new congregation. It stood approximately two-feet tall at the

base and about four inches in diameter. Near the top were eight arms extended like the spokes of a wagon wheel. Each of the arms held a candle holder, with a long white taper at the end. The entire piece was wrapped in white paper which gave it a festive appearance.

This piece was not simply a candle holder on the altar that first cold December morning in Kansas. To the Swedish people, the *ljuskrona* was the symbol of the light of Jesus Christ coming into the world.<sup>33</sup> In the midst of the winter snows they found the light, the glory of Jesus Christ and the hope of the renewal of the life sure to come. This beacon of light led them to the end of their journey. After years of tribulation and many difficulties, they had found a home.

As the last echoes of the final hymn reached the crest of the hills that surrounded them, they looked at each other through the glow of the light. They saw deeply lined, tired faces, and eyes that had seen too much suffering. But they also saw great strength, wisdom, and the faith that would see them through. Each one had carried the cross of the pioneer, and they knew that here they could plant their roots, raise their children, and worship in their own way. They had reached the top of the peaceful mountain.

## Chapter 6

### Epilogue

The year 1870 dawned with bright hopes and expectations for the future of the new settlers in the Smoky Valley. Their letters to family and friends back home in Sweden were filled with enthusiasm, encouraging the readers to join them in their grand adventure on the prairie.

During the following months and years, many others did come to the valley. The Holmkvist brothers sent word and money to their family in Småland. Eventually four brothers, their sister, and finally their widowed mother joined them in Kansas. Pastor Dahlsten's four brothers also came to Kansas and settled in the Freemount community. Dahlsten's wife, Wilhemina, encouraged her family to migrate from Illinois to Kansas. Most of them did come, including her aging parents.

The reunions between family members who had not seen each other for years were times of great excitement and anticipation. Vera Shultz remembered hearing stories decades later about how her family had prepared and anticipated the arrival of their younger brother, Pete Pehrson, Vera's grandfather. It was such a memorable event that it became one of the most often told stories in the family.<sup>1</sup>

The immigration to the Smoky Valley after the first year no longer came from around Galesburg, Illinois. Swedes came to Kansas from many different places, such as Chicago, Minnesota, and more often, like Pete Pehrson, directly from Sweden. No longer was there much separation between Swedes of the Galesburg Company and those of Lindsborg's Chicago Company. From the very first, the communities became intermixed and newcomers arrived looking for land and a home among their countrymen, not just the Chicago Swedes or Galesburg Swedes.

The Fred Norberg family arrived in the Salemsberg community from Chicago in 1872. They had lost everything in the great Chicago Fire of that year and so left to rebuild their lives in the Swedish settlements of central Kansas. They found a good piece of land in Section 21, Township 16 South, Range 3 West, built a farm and found a lifelong home. There was soon a general mixing of Swedes from many provinces in Sweden. A vast majority of the original Galesburg settlers were from Småland Province. Many of the original Chicago Company Swedes were from Värmland. Before long, most provinces in Sweden were represented in the Smoky Valley and a great security developed by being Swedish among countrymen.

The Swedes, however, were not the only ethnic group represented in the Smoky Valley. Along the fringes of the Swedish settlements were many German, Scotch, Irish and many others of differing ethnic backgrounds. Even in the heart of

the Swedish settlements, non-Swedes were found living and working harmoniously together. On the western edge of the Falun settlement, a small group of former slaves took homestead land and were generally well accepted in the Swedish communities. Some of these black homesteaders even learned to speak the Swedish language. The Americanization of all the people in the Smoky Valley slowly began until they more closely resembled Americans than people of their native country.

Some traditions changed very slowly. Most Swedes soon learned to speak a combination of Swedish and English, and eventually English became the dominant language. A few of the settlers refused to accept the new language and spoke Swedish exclusively until they died. It was nearly fifty years before English services were allowed in the church, and then only once a month. By the time the third generation had reached school age, they were completely Americanized and many could no longer speak or understand the Swedish of their parents and grandparents.

Many stories still survive from the early pioneering period and have been handed down from generation to generation, mostly through the oral tradition. Stories of sorrow and catastrophe, as well as joy and happiness, can often be heard. There are numerous and often amusing stories of contact with native Americans who happened by the Swedish homesteads. The cultural shock of these encounters must have

been noteworthy for both groups. They certainly were vividly remembered.

The homes of the Swedes in the Smoky Valley were also along several branches of the Chisholm Trail. Several stories survive about seeing the cattle herds pass, as well as run-ins with cowboys. In most cases the pioneer women were much more afraid of the cowboys than they ever were of the Indians.

Nature itself was also the cause of many hardships for the pioneers. Blizzards, prairie fires, floods, droughts, tornadoes, and grasshoppers all plagued the Smoky Valley at one time or another. These occurrences too have been remembered in very vivid stories, many tragic, but some which are also humorous.

The Smoky Valley did not become the final destination for all who came here from Illinois or Sweden. Beyond the horizon were new adventures and better land to settle. Those who came late, or whose land was of poorer quality, often moved on to new places. Many of the children of the pioneers moved to new areas. The first expansion of the Swedish settlements was to the Andover community near the Little Arkansas River on the McPherson and Rice County line. The towns of Vilas in Wilson County, Garfield in Pawnee County, and Sharon Springs in Wallace County were also a few of the places where Swedes settled in the following years. These settlements were partially offshoots of the Smoky Valley settlements and partially original settlements from Illinois

and Sweden.<sup>2</sup> Other Swedes also left and settled in Texas, Oklahoma, and Colorado.

A significant number of individuals migrated to California and Washington. They were usually second or third generation after settlement. These Swedes generally moved to the areas of Whittier and Downey, California, and Seattle, Washington.

The Swedish Lutheran Church was also a significant factor in the development of other ethnic Swedish communities in Kansas. Pastor Dahlsten did not just minister to his people in the Freemount and Salemsborg communities. Over the next twenty years he founded Lutheran congregations in New Andover, Assaria, Hutchinson, Garfield, Salina, Lawrence, and Smolan, Kansas, and Golden, Colorado. He was also the founder of the Kansas Conference of the Augustana Synod of the Lutheran Church and served as its first President.

Olof Olsson founded the Bethany Lutheran Church in Lindsborg and later became President of the Augustana Seminary. He also brought the idea for the formation of the Bethany Oratorio Society and the yearly presentation of George Frederick Handel's *Messiah* to Lindsborg. Olsson's successor at Bethany Church, Dr. Carl A. Swensson, founded Bethany College and the Bethany Oratorio Society in Lindsborg.

The Hyperevangelical Movement also followed the Swedes to the Smoky Valley. This movement eventually resulted in

the formation of the Covenant Church and soon congregations started near Salemsberg, Rose Hill near Lindsborg, in Marquette, and many other places.

Education and culture also flourished among the Swedes in the Smoky Valley. Bethany College in Lindsborg became the center of music and art, but the fine arts were not exclusive to the town of Lindsborg. Many pioneers and their children from Salemsberg and Freemount supported and participated in the cultural activities in the valley. For example, the second performance of Handel's *Messiah* was sung by the newly formed Bethany Oratorio Society on March 29, 1882 in the sanctuary of the Salemsberg Lutheran Church.

Many of the children of the Salemsberg and Freemount congregations became significant contributors in their chosen fields. Numerous young men became Lutheran pastors and missionaries. Included in the list would be Eugene Nelson, Carl Lund-Quist, Theodore Bjorkman, Emmet Eklund, J.A. Frost, Arnold Thoreen, Donald Hawk, Robert Segerhammer, Vernon Swenson, Luther Dahlsten, Alexis Andreen, Phillip Andreen, Gustaf Andreen, and others.<sup>3</sup>

Several persons from the Smoky Valley and descended from the Galesburg Company pioneers have made significant contributions on the state and national scene. Vern Lundquist is a nationally known sports broadcaster. Alexis Johnson served as ambassador to Japan and Under Secretary of State. Elwell Mattson Shanahan served as Kansas' Secretary of State. John Carlin, great-grandson of Salemsberg's



founder, C. J. Brodine, served as Governor of Kansas from 1978-1986.

Though a few have gained notoriety and fame for their achievements, those who have remained nameless have also made great contributions. The farmers, teachers, housewives, businessmen, laborers, and shopkeepers who built the farms and businesses, schools and churches - the communities that make up the Smoky Valley - they are the true achievers of the dreams their pioneer fathers and mothers brought with them to this once empty prairie.

In 1941, one of the sons of these hearty pioneers, Carl G. Linholm, had over the course of several years, written a series of articles about the history of the Swedish pioneers in southern Saline County. These articles contain a wealth of information about the area. The idea began to develop in his mind that a monument should be built honoring these pioneers who bore the "cross of privation and hardship" in their efforts to build a home on the prairie. When he completed his project, an article appeared in the Salina Journal explaining his reasons for the project. Mr. Linholm wrote:

"Readers of the Journal who have read my former articles on this subject are acquainted with my endeavor to rouse an interest in these hills in the way of beautifying them as a monument to those who, by their hardships and denials, laid the foundation for these well organized communities.

Lack of success in my efforts did not dampen my ambitions and the question arose, 'Is there

anything I myself could do?' In my travels I have noticed figures or letters on hills and mountain sides which always recalled our own Smoky Hills, and could we not create some marker near the top of the summit that would be visible over most of the county? In a reflective mood I was inspired again and again by the vision of a cross as the most appropriate figure, since the pioneers had many crosses to bear.

It was not so much the hard work and privations as the constant fear of dangers on these wild prairies, of the many serpents that were everywhere. The rattlers and copperheads were dangerous for the children who were always barefoot. It was our mother's constant fear, and her every morning prayer, that a higher hand would hover over and protect her children during the day. There was a spirit of thanksgiving at night. Then the Indians, who also cause fear for mother along with us children. The Texas cowboys were not less dangerous as they were much under the influence of liquor. My conclusion was that fear was the heaviest cross, especially of the mothers, and to the memory of our own, as well as to all pioneering mothers I dedicate the white cross at the summit of the Smoky Hills. Mother's love in the dugout, or soddy, was just as deep and strong for every one of her little ones, as mother's love in the mansion. It was for this love and love of the creator as taught by the story of the cross that they derived courage and strength to bear the many crosses of pioneer days.

A Mr. Oberg(Oborg), owner of the summit, resides in Assaria. He was delighted in giving permission to build the cross. It was created by laying stones flat on the steep hillside. The dimensions of the main stem is ten feet by forty feet high. These stones were covered with white cement and along the base of the cross is written: 'In loving remembrance of pilgrims on the prairies, in the 400th anniversary of Coronado, 1941.' On a large rock is this quotation: 'Since the universe began, until it shall be ended, the soul of man, the soul of nature, and the soul of God have blended.' We hold that the love of nature is spiritual and it behooves us all to study nature and learn all possible about our hills and rocks, our trees flowers, and lakes, and with greater love our lives may be enriched until our days shall be ended.

In pioneer days we all wondered if these hills did not hold some valuable minerals.....Out of the Smoky Hills, as they are today, can be developed greater values by far than any mineral, be it silver or gold. The former can only be shared by a few, while all, even the poorest, may have a share of treasures by developing a greater love and appreciation of the beauty and wonders of creation. Mr. Oberg holds the abstract, but the hills belong to all those who love them, and in the measure we appreciate the beauty, we hope that many who vision the white cross....and with a wider horizon in moments of silence drink in the vigor, the peacefulness and calm, that comes to one on higher ground. I am sure that many of you mothers, as you view the cross, perhaps from your kitchen window, will be prompted to lift your voices in some of the many hymns inspired by the significance of the cross, and thus be lifted to higher ground....

It would be desirable if the cross could be built more endurable in order to keep the grass and weeds out of it, but to the extent of my ability, I shall endeavor to keep it white and clean, and if perchance it has been the means of pointing some soul to a fuller, higher and richer life, I shall be ever happier and richer for building the cross on the summit of the Smoky Hills."4

It has been fifty-two years since Carl Linholm built the white cross, and one hundred and twenty-five years have passed since the Galesburg Land Company search committee visited the Smoky Valley for the first time, and found their ultimate treasure, a home for themselves and their people. The pioneers are all gone now, and most of their descendants have scattered to all parts of the country, but to most of them, the Smoky Valley will always be home. They come back now and then to visit, to attend church, greet old friends, to place a flower in the cemetery. The pioneers are not

forgotten. The hardships and privations which was their cross to bear are remembered in a story, a thought, a glance at the old picture albums.

And always, a lift of the head will bring the Smoky Bluffs into view, the same now as one hundred and twenty-five years ago. Their lofty presence, rising through the haze above the valley floor, gives us a sense of peace. The monument, white and glorious, immediately greets our eye and we know that we are home - under the shadow of the pioneer cross.

# Endnotes

## INTRODUCTION

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19. Robert L. Wright, "Westward", *Swedish Emigrant Ballads*, (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1965), 133-134, quoted in Moberg, *The Unknown Swede*, 30.
20. Robert L. Wright, "The Emigrant's Farewell", *Swedish Emigrant Ballads*, 133-135, quoted in Moberg, *The Unknown Swede*, 31.

## CHAPTER 2

1. G. Everett Arden, *Augustana Heritage*, (Rock Island, Illinois: Augustana Press, 1963), 5.
2. C.V. Bowman, *The Mission Covenant of America*, (Chicago: The Covenant Book Concern, 1925), 24-25.
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4. Ibid, 6-7.
5. E. Clifford Nelson, ed., *The Lutherans in North America*, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), 149.
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7. Nelson, ed., *The Lutherans in North America*, 165; Ernst Wilhelm Olson, *History of the Swedes of Illinois*, (Chicago: Engberg-Holmberg Pub., 1908), 241-243.
8. George Swank, *Bishop Hill, Swedish American Showcase*, (Galva, Illinois: Galva Land Magazine, 1985), 51.
9. Arden, *Augustana Heritage*, 28.
10. Ibid, 28-29.
11. Ibid, 30.
12. Anna Anderson grew to maturity and lived in Andover, Illinois for many years. She married A. P. Peterson and raised a family. Anna's children joined the Galesburg Company and migrated from Illinois to Salemsberg in 1869. Later, in 1881, Anna and A. P. Peterson left Andover to join their children in Kansas. Anna and her husband spent the remainder of their years in the Salemsberg community and are buried in the Salemsborg Cemetery. A. P. Peterson to relatives, January 1, 1898, announcing the death of Anna Anderson Peterson, Transcript in the hand of Viola Miller, Salina, Kansas. (Mrs. Miller is the granddaughter of Anna Peterson.)
13. Olson, *History of the Swedes of Illinois*, 427; Nelson, ed., *The Lutherans in North America*, 167.
14. Olson, *History of the Swedes of Illinois*, 279.
15. Arden, *Augustana Heritage*, 38; Olson, *History of the Swedes of Illinois*, 445-452.
16. Arden, *Augustana Heritage*, 39.
17. George M. Stephenson, *The Religious Aspects of Swedish Immigration*, (Minneapolis: 1932), 168, quoted in Arden, *Augustana Heritage*, 39.
18. Arden, *Augustana Heritage*, 39.
19. Ibid., 39.
20. Olson, *History of the Swedes of Illinois*, 308.
21. Ibid., 38-43.
22. Julius Esping's family included many children. Two daughters, Wilhemina and Hulda, married prominent young Lutheran pastors; A. W. Dahlsten and A. Andreen, respectively. Two sons, Axel and Julius Jr., and their cousin, Carl

- Esping, served in the 43rd Illinois Infantry Regiment. (Another cousin, Axel Esping, 45th Illinois Infantry, was killed at the Battle of Vicksburg.) Otto became a prominent early settler in the Freemount Community in Kansas. Julius and his wife, Sophia, also came to Kansas in their later years. Sophia is buried in the Freemount Cemetery, next to her son, Axel. Julius is buried at Salemsborg next to his daughter, Wilhemina, and his son-in-law, Pastor A. W. Dahlsten. Olson, *History of the Swedes of Illinois*, 435, 642-643; Inez Esping, "Memoir of Esping family history", Transcript in the hand of Earl Esping, McPherson, Kansas.
23. Alfred Bergin, "Obituary for A. W. Dahlsten", trans. Dorothy Esping, *Korsbanneret* 1919, (Rock Island, Illinois: Augustana Book Concern, 1919), 141-148.
24. Ernst William Olson, *Olof Olsson, The Man, His Work, His Thought*, (Rock Island, Illinois: Augustana Book Concern, 1941), 29-32; Emory Lindquist, *Vision For A Valley*, (Rock Island, Illinois: Augustana Historical Society, 1970), 17.
25. A. W. Dahlsten, "Some Memories From Immanuel Congregation in Chicago, 1859-1909", trans. Dorothy Esping, *Minnes Skrift 1853-1903, Svenska Ev. Lutherska Immanuel Församlingen i Chicago*, (Rock Island, Illinois: Augustana Book Concern, 1903), 83-84.
26. A. W. Dahlsten, "Hålsningar Från Dr. A. W. Dahlsten", *Minnesalbum 1869-1909, Sv. Ev. Lutherska Salemsborgs-Församlingen, Fyrtio-års Jubileum*, (Rock Island, Illinois: Augustana Book Concern, 1909), 86-87.
27. Arden, *Augustana Heritage*, 76-79.
28. *Ibid.*, 83-90.
29. *Ibid.*, 97.
30. Nelson, *The Lutherans in North America*, 192.



### CHAPTER 3

1. Allison McGill, *The Swedish Americans*, (New York: Chelsea House, 1988), 47-48.
2. Ernst Wilhelm Olson, *History of the Swedes of Illinois*, (Chicago: Engberg-Holmberg, 1908), 626.
3. Ibid., 666.
4. Henry Steele Commager, ed., *The Blue And The Grey*, (New York: The Fairfax Press, 1950), 1032.
5. Gustaf Esping was the oldest son of Julius Esping. He also was a member of the Augustana Seminary Class of 1861. He participated in many of the same clubs, classes and activities as A. W. Dahlsten. After graduation, Gustaf Esping returned to Sweden and the ministry there. He never returned to America.
6. Earl Esping, Interview by author, 18 July 1992.
7. Olson, *History of the Swedes of Illinois*, 486.
8. Ibid.
9. *Minneskrift Album*, Diamond Jubilee Anniversary, First Lutheran Church, Galesburg, Illinois, (Rock Island, Illinois: Augustana Book Concern, 1914), 18.
10. Ibid., 19.
11. Florence Edith Janson, *The Background of Swedish Immigration, 1840-1930*, (New York: Arno Press, 1970), 227.
12. Ibid., 222-225.
13. Olson, *History of the Swedes of Illinois*, 454.
14. G. Everett Arden, *Augustana Heritage*, (Rock Island, Illinois: Augustana Press, 1963), 176-177; Janson, *The Background of Swedish Immigration, 1840-1930*, 208.
15. Janson, *The Background of Swedish Immigration, 1840-1930*, 209.
16. Olson, *History of the Swedes of Illinois*, 593.
17. Ibid.
18. Ibid., 455.
19. Edith Pehrson Brown, "memoir", in the hand of Mary Mattson, Smolan, Kansas. Edith Brown was the grand-daughter of John and Matilda Danielson.
20. Stella Olson, "History of the Anderson-Holmquist Family", 1920's, p. 3, Transcript in the hand of Arthur Olson, Smolan, Kansas.
21. Ella Holmquist, notes from her reminiscences, papers in the collection of Evan Holmquist, in the hand of Terry Holmquist, Topeka, Kansas. Ella was the daughter of Johannes (John) Holmkvist, Evan was the grandson of Gust Holmkvist; Stella Olson, "History of the Anderson-Holmquist Family", p. 4; Obituary of Olaf Holmquist, newspaper clipping, Stella Olson Collection, in the hand of Thomas Holmquist, Smolan, Kansas.

22. *Saline County Republican Journal*, (Salina, Kansas) 16 March 1923, p. 4. Microfilm collection of the Salina Public Library, Salina, Kansas; Thomas Holmquist, "The Planting of Roots, The Gust Holmquist Family of Kansas, 1842-1940", 1987, p. 5, Holmquist Family Collection in the hand of Thomas Holmquist, Smolan, Kansas.
23. Many years later, in 1892, Eric Norelius was working on his massive book: *De Svenska Lutherska Församlingarna Svenskarnes, Historia I Amerika*. He requested from A. W. Dahlsten a history of the Swedish migration to Saline and McPherson Counties, Kansas. Pastor Dahlsten replied with a nine page letter describing these events. It is the only known account of the Galesburg Colonization Company meetings written by a major participant, and one of the few surviving accounts of the subsequent migration experience. Unfortunately, Norelius included little of Dahlsten's history in his book. He instead focused on the settling of Lindsborg. Consequently, the history of the Swedish settlements to the north and west of Lindsborg were never fully documented.
24. Eric Norelius, *De Svenska Lutherska Församlingarna Svenskarnes, Historia I Amerika*, (The Swedish Lutheran Congregation's History in America), (Rock Island, Illinois: Augustana Book Concern, 1916), 426.
25. A. W. Dahlsten, to Eric Norelius, 11 February 1891, p. 2, Trans. Dorothy Esping, Eric Norelius Collection, Swenson Swedish Immigration Center, Rock Island, Illinois.
26. F. G. Hawkinson, "Memoir written for the 50th Anniversary of the Freemount Congregation", in *Pioneer Life and Lore of McPherson County, Kansas*, ed. Edna Nyquist, (McPherson, Kansas: The Democrat-Opinion Press, 1932), 134.
27. For a better understanding of the life of Olof Olsson, see Emory Lindquist, *Vision For A Valley*, (Rock Island, Illinois: Augustana Historical Society, 1970); or Ernst William Olson, *Olof Olson, The Man, His Work, and His Thought*, Rock Island, Illinois: Augustana Book Concern, 1941).
28. A. W. Dahlsten, Galesburg, Illinois to Olof Olsson, Sunnemo Parish, Sweden, 4 May 1868, in the hand of Mrs. Edna Dahlsten, Lindsborg, Kansas; Lindquist, *Vision For A Valley*, 16-19.
29. Ibid.
30. Olson, *History of the Swedes of Illinois*, 593-594.
31. A. W. Dahlsten to Eric Norelius, 11 February 1891, p. 3.
32. Hawkinson in Nyquist, 135; Norelius, *De Svenska Lutherska Församlingarna Svenskarnes, Historia I Amerika*, 426.
33. *Miniskrift Album*, Diamond Jubilee Anniversary, First Lutheran Church, Galesburg, Illinois, (Rock Island, Illinois: Augustana Book Concern, 1914), 19; Ruth Bildt and

- Elizabeth Jaderborg, *The Smoky Valley in the After Years*, (Lindsborg, Kansas: Lindsborg News-Record, 1969), 23.
34. Dahlsten to Norelius, 11 February 1891, p. 3.
35. Ibid., p. 4.
36. *Det Rätta Hemlandet*, (The Correct Homeland), (Chicago), July–November, 1868.
37. Ibid.
38. Bildt and Jaderborg, *The Smoky Valley in the After Years*, 13–15, 16.
39. Ibid., p. 24.
40. Dahlsten to Norelius, 11 February 1891, p. 4.
41. *Hemlandet*, "Advertisement", July–November 1868. An advertisement for the National Land Company to visit the Land Office and its agent, John Johnson, in Salina, Kansas, to buy railroad land in the river valleys of Kansas.
42. Saline County, Kansas. Register of Deeds, Book 1. (1866–1870), 530–533; Hawkinson in Nyquist, *Pioneer Life and Lore of McPherson County, Kansas*, 135; Dahlsten to Norelius, 11 February 1891, p. 3.
43. Norelius, *De Svenska Lutherska Församlingarna Svenkarnes, Historia I Amerika*, 427.
44. D. Aidan McQuillan, *Prevailing Over Time, Ethnic Adjustment on the Kansas Prairies, 1875–1925*, (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1990), 49.
45. Alfred Bergin, "Obituary of Dr. A. W. Dahlsten", *Korsbanneret, 1919*, (Rock Island, Illinois: Augustana Book Concern, 1919), 145.
46. Emory Lindquist, *Smoky Valley People*, (Lindsborg, Kansas: Bethany College, 1953), 170–171.
47. Hawkinson in Nyquist, *Pioneer Life and Lore of McPherson County, Kansas*, 135.
48. Pastor Dahlsten may have been inaccurate in his report of acres. Earlier in his letter he reported that the committee had acquired 21,000 acres. In fact, the committee had acquired 22 sections of 640 acres, or 14,080 acres. It is more likely that Thorstenberg acquired 38 more sections or 24,340 acres instead of the reported 38,000 acres. Dahlsten may also have referred to the total of both purchases which would have totaled 38,420 acres.
49. Dahlsten to Norelius, 11 February 1891, p. 5.

## CHAPTER 4

1. *Det Rätta Hemlandet*, (Chicago, Illinois, 1868), weekly issues, July-October, 1868.
2. *Ibid.*
3. There is no known physical or documentary evidence to support this tale, but Evan Holmquist, grandson of Gust Holmkvist, believed it to be true. It does however make sense. Thomas N. Holmquist, "The Planting of Roots, the Gust Holmquist Family, 1842-1940", 1987, 7; Evan Holmquist, interview by author, oral traditions of the Holmquist family.
4. Linda Hubalek, Interview by author, July 20, 1993.
5. Fred Olson, ed. and trans., *Building By Faith, The Assaria Lutheran Church*, (Lindsborg, Kansas: Lindsborg News-Record, 1975), 11.
6. *Ibid.*, 11-12.
7. John P. Stromquist, "memoir", quoted in Allan Lindfors and Eleanor Burnison, *Pioneers On The Prairie*, (Lindsborg, Kansas: Lindsborg News-Record, 1978) , 11-12.
8. John Englund, "Reminiscences of Early Pioneer Days", in Ruth Bergin Bildt and Elizabeth Jaderborg, *The Smoky Valley in the After Years*, (Lindsborg, Kansas: Lindsborg News-Record, 1969) , 188.
9. *Ibid.*, 189.
10. Smoky Valley Genealogical Society, *Deaths and Internments, Saline County, Kansas, 1859-1985*, (Salina, Kansas: Smoky Valley Genealogical Society, 1985), 152.
11. Phillip L. Nelson, Interview by author, 7 July 1993, Smolan, Kansas. Mr. Nelson is the great-grandson of C.J. Brodine.
12. Saline County, Kansas, "Will of C.J. Brodine", The Probate Court of Saline County, Kansas, 21 January 1899.
13. James Nelson, Interview by author, 23 August 1992, Lindsborg, Kansas. James Nelson is the great-grandson of C.J. Brodine.
14. Carl J. Stromquist, "The Pioneer Period in Salemsborg and Freemount", quoted in Bildt and Jaderborg, *The Smoky Valley in the After Years*, 28-29.
15. Dr. Carl A. Swensson, "Obituary of C.J. Brodine", *Det Rätta Hemlandet*, (Chicago), 25 July 1895.
16. Englund, quoted in Bildt and Jaderborg, *The Smoky Valley in the After Years*, 189; Lindfors and Burnison, *Pioneers of the Prairie*, 7.
17. Hans Hanson, quoted in Lindfors and Burnison, *Pioneers On The Prairie*, 28.
18. Englund, quoted in Bildt and Jaderborg, *The Smoky Valley in the After Years*, 189-190.

19. "Snakes Wiggles In Furrows As He Broke First Ground In Saline", *Saline County Republican Journal*, (Salina, Kansas), 16 March 1923, p. 4, col. 3.
20. Darrel Holmquist, Interview by author, 26 December 1992. Remembrances of the stories that he had heard from his uncle Ted Holmquist and his Grandmother Lovisa Holmquist; Doris Ostenberg Frost, Interview by author, 3 November 1991. Stories she remembered from her family.
21. *Saline County Republican Journal*, 16 March 1923, p. 4.
22. Englund, quoted in Bildt and Jaderborg, *The Smoky Valley in the After Years*, 191.
23. Lindfors and Burnison, *Pioneers On The Prairie*, 32-34.
24. Ibid., 10.
25. Ibid., 34.
26. Ibid., 38-39.
27. Emil Hanson, quoted in Lindfors and Burnison, *Pioneers On The Prairie*, 39.
28. There are many stories of contact between Swedes and the Indians, especially after 1870. However it is beyond the scope of this book to recount them.
29. Dorothy Sandberg, "Sandberg Family Papers", in the hand of Dorothy Sandberg, Smolan, Kansas.
30. Englund, quoted in Bildt and Jaderborg, *The Smoky Valley in the After Years*, 192.
31. Otto Esping, "Diary, 1869-1876", in the hand of Earl Esping, McPherson, Kansas, Mr. Esping is the grandson of Otto Esping.
32. Stromquist, quoted in Bildt and Jaderborg, *The Smoky Valley in the After Years*, 24.
33. "Recalls The Old Mail Coach That Ran From McPherson To Salina", *Saline County Republican Journal*, (Salina, Kansas), 24 April 1923, p. 3.
34. Carl G. Linholm, "The Swedish Pioneers", (McPherson, Kansas, 22 March 1929), newspaper clipping, Stella Olson Collection in the hand of Thomas Holmquist, Smolan, Kansas.
35. *Diamond Jubilee Album, Falun Lutheran Church*, (Falun, Kansas: Privately published, 1962), 8.
36. Neva Danielson Hessler, "A History", in the hand of Milton Shultz, McClean, Virginia.

## CHAPTER 5

1. Ernst Wilhelm Olson, *History of the Swedes of Illinois*, (Chicago: Engberg-Holmberg, 1908), 452-456; G. Everett Arden, *Augustana Heritage*, (Rock Island, Illinois: Augustana Press, 1963), 167.
2. Ibid.
3. Carl Stromquist, "The Pioneer Period in Freemount and Salemsborg, J.P. Stromquist's Story", in Ruth Bergin Bildt and Elizabeth Jaderborg, ed., *The Smoky Valley in the After Years*, (Lindsborg, Kansas: Lindsborg News-Record, 1969), 26.
4. Ibid.
5. F.G. Hawkinson, "Memoir Written for the 50th Anniversary of the Freemount Congregation", (1919) in Edna Nyquist, Ed., *Pioneer Life and Lore of McPherson County, Kansas*, (McPherson, Kansas: The Democrat-Opinion Press, 1932), 136; Eugene Nelson, *A Century of Blessings*, (Freemount, Kansas, Freemount Lutheran Church, 1969), 10-11.
6. "Digging Up the Past", (Marquette, Kansas: Marquette Tribune) 7 January 1992, p. 3, col. 4.
7. Hawkinson in Nyquist, *Pioneer Life and Lore of McPherson County, Kansas*, 137.
8. Ibid.
9. J.P. Aurelius, M.T.D., "The Congregation in Freemont, Kansas", in Bildt and Jaderborg, ed., *The Smoky Valley in the After Years*, 96.
10. Allan Lindfors and Eleanor Burnison, *Elim Our Heritage*, (Marquette, Kansas: Elim Lutheran Church, 1980), 17; Nelson, *A Century of Blessings*, 11.
11. History remains silent on the details of these organizational meetings. No personal accounts written by anyone who attended the meetings have been located. The early records of the meetings at Salemsborg were probably lost in the fire that destroyed the Salemsborg Church on July 29, 1925. The surviving records of the early days of Salemsborg Church are scanty at best.
12. *Minnes Album, Svenska Lutherska Församlingen, Salemsborg, Kansas, 1869-1909*, (Memory Album, Swedish Lutheran Congregation, Salemsborg, Kansas, 1869-1909), (Rock Island, Illinois: Augustana Book Concern, 1909), 7.
13. J.O. Wallin, "Slutpsalm" (End Psalm), *Den Svenska Psalm-Boken*, (The Swedish Psalm-Book), (Rock Island, Illinois: Augustana Book Concern, 1884 edition), 375.
14. Ibid. Translation, Dorothy Esping. The word "Salems" in the poem is capitalized and may refer to a specific geographic location. Locally, by tradition, Salems has always been translated as peaceful, as in "peaceful

mountain". Therefore that is the accepted translation of the term Salemsberg.

15. Eventually, the spelling of Salemsberg changed to Salemsborg. Where a literal translation of Salemsberg is "Peaceful Mountain", the translation of Salemsborg is "Peaceful Fortress". This translation too is also appropriate. The great church structure which stands on the knoll today resembles a mighty fortress standing atop a hill. The words, "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God", are inscribed above the doors of the present church, both in Swedish and English. They remind all those that enter, that this is truly God's fortress of peace in the Smoky Valley of Kansas.

16. Clarence Dahlsten ed. and trans., *Salemsborg, 1869-1959*, (Smolan Kansas: Salemsborg Lutheran Church, 1959), 5-6.

17. The term "Americans" referred generally to anyone who was not Swedish.

18. Dahlsten, ed., *Salemsborg, 1869-1959*, p. 8.

19. Ibid.

20. Edith Larson, Interview, February 14, 1993.

21. J. P. Aurelius, in Bildt and Jaderborg, *The Smoky Valley in the After Years*, 96.

22. There are now no surviving records or minutes of the Salemsborg Congregation before 1879. Unfortunately, a devastating fire completely destroyed the Salemsborg Church on July 29, 1925. Many records and objects from the church were saved, however, the first book of church minutes was apparently lost. The quotes from the official organizational meetings therefore come from other writings and publications that predate the fire.

23. Gustaf Erickson, "Salemsborg", in Bildt and Jaderborg, *The Smoky Valley in the After Years*, 30.

24. Ibid.

25. Pastor J. A. Frost to the Salemsborg Congregation, in *Minnes Album, Svenska Lutherska Församlingen, Salemsborg, Kansas, 1869-1909*, 9.

26. Pastor A. W. Dahlsten, to Eric Norelius, letter dated 14 February 1891, Norelius Collection, Swenson Swedish Immigration Center, Rock Island, Illinois, p. 5.

27. *Minnes Album, Svenska Lutherska Församlingen, Salemsborg, Kansas, 1869-1909*, 15.

28. Dahlsten to Norelius, 14 February 1891, p. 7.

29. Ibid., p. 8.

30. Ibid.

31. Julotta was and is the Swedish devotional service held at dawn on Christmas Day. Each of the Swedish congregations in the Smoky Valley has maintained that tradition, and Julotta is still held at 6:00 a.m. on December 25 every year.

32. Anna Sjogren Carlson, "memories" quoted in Alan Lindfors and Eleanor Burnison, *Elim, Our Heritage*, (Marquette, Kansas: Elim Lutheran Church, 1980), 16.

33. The Salemsborg ljuskrona is one of the very few relics that still exist from the early pioneer days of the Swedes at Salemsborg. The original has been preserved and is in the possession of the Danielson family. An exact duplicate was made by Mark Esping of the Folklife Institute of Central Kansas, in Lindsborg, Kansas. The replica is in the possession of the Holmquist family and is still used as a part of the Salemsborg Christmas celebrations.



## CHAPTER 6

1. Vera Shultz, interview by author, 2 July 1991, McClean, Virginia.

2. Wayne Wheeler, *An Analysis of Social Change in a Swedish Immigrant Community: The Case of Lindsborg, Kansas*, (New York: AMS Press, 1986), 181.

3. Gustav Andreen was the oldest son of A. Andreen, prominent Lutheran Pastor and brother-in-law of A. W. Dahlsten. Gustav's mother, Hulda, died in 1870 and his father committed suicide in 1879. Gustav and his brothers and sisters came to Salemsberg to live with their uncle and aunt, A. W. and Wilhemina Dahlsten. While Gustav Andreen lived at Salemsberg, he taught at the nearby Hultman School. During the Christmas break, Gustav Andreen received word that he was accepted to enter Yale University. Upon graduation from Yale, he entered the Augustana Seminary where he became a pastor and educator. Gustav Andreen taught at Augustana College and eventually assumed the Presidency of the Augustana Seminary, a post he held for many years. Alexis and Phillip Andreen also became Lutheran ministers in the Augustana Synod.

4. Carl G. Linholm, "Glory To Pioneer", *Salina Journal*, (Salina, Kansas), 1941, newspaper clipping, Stella Olson Collection in the hand of Thomas Holmquist, Smolan, Kansas.

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Frost, Emery, Interview by author, 21 March 1993, Smolan, Kansas.

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Hubalek, Linda, Interview by author, 20 July 1993, Aurora, Colorado.

Larson, Edith, Interview by author, 14 February 1993, Lindsborg, Kansas.

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